



**DEFEND BLACK  
LIVES MATTER**

**WHY FIGHT MUST STAY RADICAL >>Pages 3 and 5**



**HOW BREXIT  
COULD HAVE  
MEANT MORE**

**>>Pages 6 and 20**

# Socialist Worker

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# LET'S GIVE JOHNSON THE JAB

**Knock  
out the  
Tories**

## COVID-19

**Virus deaths pass  
grim 1.5 million  
global milestone**

OVER 1.5 million people have now died worldwide from coronavirus.

Cases are soaring and transmission of the virus appears to be speeding up.

Some governments have been forced to extend restrictions. But the system they defend has failed to protect ordinary people.

**>>Page 8**

## IMPERIALISM



**The West's  
hidden horrors  
in Afghanistan**

A REPORT has revealed atrocities carried out by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan.

It's a small taste of the brutality and torture carried out by all occupying forces, including those from Britain.

But Britain has fought hard to cover up its crimes.

**>>Pages 10&11**

## PALESTINE

**Labour leadership  
attempts to crush  
solidarity action**

THE LABOUR Party escalated its war on solidarity with Palestinians last week—banning some members from discussing a charity bike ride for Palestine.

One campaigner said “the ability to talk about Palestine” in Labour is “shrinking”.

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## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'We're a much better country than every single one of them'**

Tory education secretary **Gavin Williamson** on why Britain is getting a coronavirus vaccine first

**'They really rushed through that approval'**

**Dr Anthony Fauci**, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, is less certain

**'Time is in very short supply'**

The latest thing the government says it has run out of

**'To see ill-informed Labour politicians and do-gooding celebrities attempting to conflate the victims of Windrush with these vile criminals set for deportation is not only misjudged and upsetting but deeply offensive'**

Home Secretary **Priti Patel** with her usual approach

**'She hasn't taken the time to meet with us or speak with us. How can she know what's deeply offensive for us?'**

Windrush victim **Glenda Caesar**



# Rishi Sunak eats at private club while freezing workers' pay

**RISHI SUNAK** dined at a lavish, exclusive private club last week after telling around 2 million workers they would see a real-terms pay cut as inflation rises.

Far from the branches of ordinary food outlets where the chancellor has posed for publicity photos, Sunak enjoyed a private dinner with his millionaire wife.

The Chancellor has kept quiet about a £430 million shareholding in Infosys, an IT firm founded by his wife's father.

Infosys has signed a framework agreement with Whitehall. It means it can be awarded contracts without competition.

It isn't in his entry in the official parliamentary register, nor are holdings in at least six other companies.

Government ministers



ON THEIR way to dinner last week

are required to declare any financial interests that might be relevant to their role, which includes those of their close family members.

The £1,800 a year exclusive 5 Hertford Street club where Sunak dined has its own cigar shop and a downstairs nightclub called Loulou's.

Last year there were

protests outside the club as staff threatened to go on strike, demanding they be paid the living wage.

5 Hertford Street is owned by Robin Birley who has an estimated £120 million wealth. The list of top Tories who have frequented the club reportedly includes Michael Gove, Zac Goldsmith—Birley's

half-brother—Carrie Symonds and David Cameron.

THE BEST friend of Boris Johnson's partner Carrie Symonds was given an official paid role without it being advertised.

The Home Office announced in October that Nimco Ali had been made an adviser on tackling violence against women and girls. She is paid £350 a day for around two days' work a month.

The job was not advertised through any competitive application process.

Ali is godmother to Symonds' son with the prime minister. She stood unsuccessfully to be Tory mayoral candidate in London.

A response to a freedom of information request revealed the role was granted via "a direct appointment process".

THE ENVIRONMENT Agency has dramatically reduced the frequency that it attends water pollution incidents. Between the start of April and the end of August the Environment Agency attended just 292 water pollution incidents, down from 1,726 during the same period in 2019. That's an 83 percent reduction but the number of reports of pollution is down only 3 percent.



Unlikely to be tested

THE RICH are not able to have their luxury holidays this Christmas, so they are staying in Britain, gobbling up super-costly turkeys. Paul Kelly, managing director of KellyBronze, which produces hand-plucked, dry hung, free range turkeys, said his sales were double the level they would normally be at this point. The firm's website, with the headline "bred to be wild", offers an 11 kilo bird for £146.44.

## Trump steps up killing spree on his way out

**DONALD Trump's** administration is using its last few weeks in the White House to push through executions.

After years without any executions agreed at the federal level rather than by states, the Justice Department reversed course this summer.

It carried out three death sentences in four days.

Overall, the US government has already executed eight prisoners since the Trump administration resumed federal executions on 14 July for the first time in 17 years.

This is more than had been carried out over the previous three decades.



Executioner in chief

Now the department, knowing Joe Biden has said he opposes the death penalty, has scheduled two for next week and three more during the week before Biden takes office.

The five condemned federal prisoners include four black men and one white woman.

## Prosecution over wall collapse work deaths

TWO recycling companies, and two people linked to them, are to be charged over the deaths of five African men who died when a concrete wall fell on them.

Almamo Jammeh, Ousmane Diaby, Bangally Dukureh, Saibo Sillah and Mahamadou Jagana died at Shredmet's premises in Birmingham on 7 July 2016.

The Health and Safety Executive is to now going to prosecute the company ENSCO 10101—formerly known as Shredmet—and its predecessor Hawkeswood Metal Recycling.



Fighting for justice

The four men from The Gambia and one from Senegal were clearing a bay at the recycling plant in Nechells when a 3.6 metres (11ft 10in) adjacent wall collapsed, causing hundreds of tonnes of metal ingots to fall on top of them.

The men could only be identified by their fingerprints.

## Tories are fixing the track and trace figures

THE TORIES' disastrous test and trace system has at last reported an improvement in its contact tracing rate—by changing the way the figures are collated.

The privatised scheme said it had contacted 72.5 percent of people identified as having been near Covid sufferers in England.

This was up from 60.5 percent the previous week and after plateauing around 60 percent for weeks. The figures, for the week to 25 November, follow "protocol" changes to the way families with a positive Covid-19 case are phoned.

### Tracers

Children are no longer contacted individually by contact tracers.

Once the parent provides basic information for their children, they are marked as "complete".

But there's no guarantee that the child will stay home from school or realise this is a necessity.

Test and Trace now has a £22 billion budget.

That is equivalent to nearly a fifth of the entire NHS budget each year. It is still failing to meet key targets set by government scientists.

Although the 72.5 percent figure is an improvement, it is still well short of the 80 percent target that the Sage scientists' advisory group recommends.

Meanwhile government figures from the mass testing programme in Liverpool showed the tests missed half of all positive cases detected by standard coronavirus tests.

They missed 30 percent of those with a high viral load—likely to be the most infectious.

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London  
E16 9EJ



# Priti Patel stokes racism against desperate migrants

by TOMÁŠ TENGEY-EVANS

**TORY HOME secretary Priti Patel is trying to stir up another “culture war” in the wake of a deportation flight to Jamaica.**

Patel hit out against “do-gooding celebrities” and “ill-informed Labour politicians” who signed open letters against the charter flight last week.

She smeared them as standing “in solidarity with rapists and murders” and “foreign criminals” after successful legal challenges stopped the deportation of 23 people last Wednesday.

Some 13 people were still deported on the flight.

One open letter from black public figures, including actor Naomie Harris, author Afua Hirsch and historian David Olusoga, had urged charter airlines to not cooperate with the Home Office.

Another letter signed by some Labour MPs called for the flight not to go ahead.

Patel is using the deportations as a pretext to build support for an authoritarian clampdown on migrants.

## Reforms

She plans to make Britain’s already brutal immigration system—which is stacked against asylum seekers—even worse with a set of changes in the New Year.

Her proposals include stopping last-minute legal appeals against deportation and making it harder to appeal a refused asylum claim.

The reality is that those facing deportation have every reason to stay in Britain.

Emma’s partner John was scheduled to be on the flight but was removed at the last moment.

It was the Tories’ second attempt in less than a year to deport him.

“I’m so relieved and happy I didn’t have to tell the children their father

**THE HOME secretary—here signing up to attacks on people trying come to Britain—is doubling down**

was in Jamaica,” she told Socialist Worker. “I feel in a better position, but he is still in detention.”

John was forced to leave Jamaica in 2002 after a gang tried to kill him over paying “protection money” for his taxi.

He had indefinite leave to remain in Britain until he was sent to prison on drugs charges in 2015.

He was detained after signing on at the Home Office’s Eaton House in November without being able to say goodbye to Emma or his three children.

Emma says the process “has been really hard” on her and the children. “I’ve only been able to work

between school hours so money wise it’s going to be tight now,” she explained.

“The teacher said my youngest daughter has just been crying for the last two days and had an upset stomach.

## Home

“My kids didn’t really know what was happening. I told them he’s working in London and they kept asking, ‘when is he coming home?’”

Meanwhile, the Labour leadership’s response was to fold to Tory rhetoric.

Labour leader Keir Starmer, deputy

leader Angela Rayner and shadow justice secretary David Lammy were among the Labour MPs who didn’t sign the letter against the flight.

The Tories’ aim is to paint migrants as criminals and deflect people’s anger.

It helps create a false division between “good” and “bad” migrants.

It will reinforce racism against migrants and black people in general.

Anti-racists must stand against all deportations.

## What’s your story?

Email with your ideas  
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

## ANTI-RACISM

### Defend those who back Black Lives Matter

TORY MINISTER George Eustice has given “shelter to racists” after he failed to condemn Millwall football fans who booed players “taking the knee” for Black Lives Matter.

Some Millwall fans booed players before the east London football team’s match against Derby last weekend.

When asked about the incident, Eustice said, “The issue of race and racial discrimination is something that we all take very, very seriously.”

But he added, “My personal view is that Black Lives Matter, capital B, L and M, is actually a political movement that is different to what most of us believe in, which is standing up for racial equality.”

Eustice echoed remarks by equalities minister Kemi Badenoch, when she

## Taking the knee

dismissed Black Lives Matter as “anti-capitalist” and “political”.

Sanjay Bhandari of anti-racist football charity Kick It Out said, “Careless responses like this provide shelter to racists who oppose anti-racist gestures.”

A statement from Stand Up To Racism said it has “been hugely positive for clubs to adopt take the knee” in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The group celebrated its adoption “in response to deep concerns of players and fans about racism in the game and in wider society”.

“Black players consistently play a hugely important role both on and off the pitch,” the statement adds.

“Marcus Rashford’s stand over free school meals has saved hundreds of thousands of children from hunger this Xmas.

“He shamed Boris Johnson into a U-turn, it should be remembered. And we know that black people have suffered disproportionately in the Covid-19 crisis.

“So why would anyone wish to boo those making the argument that Black Lives Matter?”

## Socialist Worker Appeal to raise £125,000

Socialist Worker gives a voice to the people fighting for a better world. Throughout the pandemic it has confronted the racist scapegoating and anti-working class rhetoric of the mainstream press.

We publish stories of the strikes and protests that can beat back the bosses and bigots. We are asking everyone who enjoys Socialist Worker to donate as much as they can and help fund the resistance.

*‘In these challenging times it is crucial to interpret the world we live in to change it. Socialist Worker provides an indispensable voice in the struggle for socialist consciousness and as a weapon to organise the many against the few. It urgently needs the support of readers and well-wishers to keep it alive and running, vibrant and strong. Let your donation be a sign of your solidarity and commitment to this vital cause.’*

**Ronnie Kasrils — former South African freedom fighter**

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£125,000  
Total so far  
£110,379  
£100,000  
£75,000  
£50,000  
£25,000





# Tory plans for Covid-19 vaccine raise deep concerns

by YURI PRASAD

## BACK STORY

**THE ANNOUNCEMENT** that a Covid-19 vaccine has arrived in British hospitals and some immunisations will start shortly has been met by a huge sigh of relief.

The NHS is taking delivery of 800,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine—enough to immunise 400,000 people. And ministers say they will get several million more doses in the coming weeks.

But given the Tories' appalling record of handling all aspects of the coronavirus crisis, there are already reasons to be cautious about the news.

The priority list published last week by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation lists nine categories of people who should receive jabs in phase one.

At the top of the list are residents of care homes for older adults. Second are those who are over 80 years old and all frontline health and social care workers.

### Care

There are around 500,000 people in care homes and 3.2 million people over the age of 80 in Britain.

There are over 1.5 million people working in adult social care. And NHS England alone employs around 500,000 frontline medical staff.

The total number of high risk people in all categories is roughly 17 million.

The infrastructure required to vaccinate that number of people, some of whom cannot be moved from their homes, is enormous.

Thanks to years of cuts the NHS simply does not have the capacity to do it.

It is made more complicated by the fact that the Pfizer vaccine must be stored at minus 70 degrees and used within five days of being removed from an ultra-cold freezer.

Health secretary Matt Hancock's plan for everyone else appears to rest on recruiting thousands of

**After Covid-19 vaccine breakthroughs in November, doses will now be rolled out**

● Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer charge £14.70 for a two-injection course

● Products are developed and marketed on their profit-making abilities, not lifesaving potential

● The Tories' pandemic failures mean they cannot be trusted

● And many of the world's' poorest won't have access to the vaccine

non-medical staff to inject people—including anyone who has had some basic first aid training.

The Pfizer drug seems likely to be given emergency authorisation by both US and European Union drug agencies in the coming weeks.

It will lead to huge demand outstripping supply. And, although governments deny it will be allowed, the rich will try to jump the queue.

The NHS cannot depend on the Pfizer vaccine alone. The government may be forced to use supplies of the less effective AstraZenica/Oxford University immunisation.

This could lead to a new crisis. Who should be offered a weaker vaccine?

And the majority of the world's population are likely to be left without a vaccine for considerable time due to drug costs, combined with logistical issues.

The manufacture and distribution of these vital drugs must be taken out of private hands.

Patents for the vaccines should be lifted, and the technical knowledge of how to produce them should be made freely available.

But the insatiable search for profit means capitalism will never allow such a thing.

This should convince us that the only way to safeguard humanity is to replace the rotten system.

Read the full article at [bit.ly/SWvaccines](https://bit.ly/SWvaccines)

CORONAVIRUS VACCINES were to be used in Britain from Tuesday this week

## More schools are forced to shut as coronavirus outbreaks spread

by SADIE ROBINSON

**CORONAVIRUS CHAOS** is causing soaring numbers of schools across England to close.

The latest figures from the Department for Education (DfE) show that the number of schools fully closed more than doubled in a week. It admitted that this was “driven by an increase in the number of schools closed for Covid-19 reasons”.

And even those not fully closed have large numbers of teachers and students isolating at home.

This makes a mockery of Tory claims that they are keeping schools open to protect students' mental health and education.

But it is possible to resist. A primary school in Tower Hamlets, east London, closed for a week after school workers and union reps raised safety concerns.

An NEU union rep at the school told Socialist Worker, “It seemed clear that teachers were getting infected from pupils,

as a last resort—where workers can refuse to work in an unsafe environment.

“After discussions, the head announced that the school would close for a week. And after that other measures we called for, such as complete bubbles, will be in place.”

Despite the risks, Public Health England (PHE) did not advise the school to close.

“In one of our briefings, someone from PHE said there's nothing unusual about our school and that infection figures are quite typical”, the rep said.

But it is not reassuring that many other schools have high levels of disruption—instead it is deeply worrying.

Nearly 120,000 people have signed a petition calling for a two-week school lockdown from 9 December.

Over 415,000 have signed another petition calling for schools and colleges to be closed to “protect teachers and pupils and their families”.

Read the full article at [bit.ly/schools1220](https://bit.ly/schools1220)

and that we had asymptomatic children in school.”

Union reps asked the head to close the school, or to close certain buildings where the virus was concentrated.

“We got the sense that our head agreed with us, but felt her hands were tied by the government.

“So we said we would email all our members to ask whether they support our demands and if they are prepared to act to win them.

“We mentioned Section 44

that the government is insisting should happen at all costs.

Occasional shopping trips are not driving the infections up. Reckless government policy, such as the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, are.

And even top government officials were confused about new guidelines.

In tier two areas, which affect 32 million people, pub customers were only able to be served if they were also eating a “substantial meal”.

## Christmas shoppers blamed for following the new rules

THE ATTEMPT to blame ordinary people for the spread of coronavirus shows no sign of slowing down.

Right wing press sneered at people queuing late at night or early in the morning outside some Primark shops.

Around 11 shops were open all night after England's national lockdown ended on Wednesday of last week.

And across England, bars and restaurants were busy with people after opening for the first time in a month.

But people are merely going along with what the government has encouraged.

Pictures flooded social media of shoppers filling London's Oxford Street and Covent Garden and a Nottingham Christmas market.

It's not that people are stupid or reckless. People are attempting to fulfil the promise of a so-called “normal Christmas”

Who is to blame?

Initially, the Covid Winter Plan document described this as “like a full breakfast, main lunchtime or evening meal”.

Yet government ministers gave conflicting advice on what constituted “substantial”.

Opening shops and restaurants is a result of the government wanting to increase bosses' profits.

Blaming people for following the rules is not only hypocritical—it also lets the real culprits off the hook.

that 2021 risks becoming the worst humanitarian crisis year since the Second World War.

Mark Lowcock, a UN humanitarian affairs agency leader, said the lives of 235 million people are at stake—a 40 percent increase. Poverty is rising globally for the first time in 20 years while life expectancy will fall. In many poorer countries just one in five might be vaccinated against coronavirus by the end of next year. World Health

Organisation head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, reacted to this news.

“We simply cannot accept a world in which the poor and marginalised are trampled by the rich and powerful in the stampede for vaccines,” Tedros said.

These are powerful words. But the poverty and profit-first priorities that lead to such outcomes are maintained by the powers that make up the leadership of the UN.

## Starvation on the increase

HUNDREDS of millions of people are “marching towards starvation” due to the handling of the pandemic.

That was the message from David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Programme, to a United Nations general assembly special session last week. Beasley said 2021 will be catastrophic. “Famine is literally on the horizon and we are talking about the next few months,” he said.

He warned

that 2021 risks becoming the worst humanitarian crisis year since the Second World War.

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One in ten people have had the virus in Bastwell, where 86 percent of residents come from a black or Asian background.

This is four times higher than a neighbourhood five miles away where only 2 percent of people are non-white.

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Read the full article at [bit.ly/schools1220](https://bit.ly/schools1220)

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**Socialist Worker**  
WHAT WE THINK

## DON'T LET THE TORIES DEFINE ANTI-RACISM

**I**N THE wake of George Floyd's killing, Black Lives Matter (BLM) made great advances in the struggle against racism, and what it means to be an anti-racist.

Now the racists at the top of society want to push it all back.

After Millwall football fans booed players for taking the knee—a symbol of defiance against a racist system—Tory politicians suggested the booing was defensible.

Cabinet minister George Eustice claimed that opposing Black Lives Matter was not the same as being against racial equality.

“Black Lives Matter, capital B, L and M, is actually a political movement that is different to what most of us believe in, which is standing up for racial equality,” he said.

In other words, he wanted to separate the horror at racist killings that sparked BLM from the radical political demands that the movement raised.

He wants to blunt the radical, political edge of what it means to be an anti-racist.

The right are trying a similar offensive over the issue of

deportations. The Windrush Generation scandal of 2018 made deportation in general much more difficult to defend.

Before the scandal, the Tories had been happy to talk openly of the “hostile environment” they had created for migrants.

They would boast of sending criminals and people living in Britain undocumented “home”.

The backlash they faced after the Windrush scandal made that much more difficult.

Now they're using recent deportations to Jamaica to argue that it's right to deport people who have criminal convictions.

By getting people to accept that it's okay for some people to

be deported, they hope to make deportations more acceptable again. If the Tories think this can be a turning point for them against anti-racism, anti-racists have to be prepared to defend their political demands.

A spokesperson for Black Lives Matter UK responded to Eustice by saying, “Taking a knee is not a political statement or showing support for any political group.”

Yet the power of the BLM movement is that it points the finger at a racist political system and has dragged radical demands into the mainstream.

Taking the knee is a political act.

It began as a refusal by athletes in the US to stand for the national anthem of a state that killed them. Black Lives Matter is about defunding the police—and insisting that they are institutionally racist.

It's about tearing down the statues of slavers as a symbol of the racism the system is built on.

These are the ideas and demands that make BLM so threatening to those at the top—and why the Tories are so keen to push the movement back.

They have to be defended.

And the move shows capitalism has no solution to water scarcity, climate crisis or environmental degradation. A water futures market was first floated as wildfires and droughts gripped California during the summer. One of California's biggest users of water—and drivers of droughts—is big agribusiness. A huge chunk relies on very profitable, and destructive, methods of almond farming. Yet rather than promoting a shift to sustainable agriculture, the capitalist answer to water

scarcity is gambling based on its scarcity.

This is no accident—it flows from capitalism's drive to maximise profits. Capitalist competition means bosses are locked into a never-ending battle to accumulate more. Everything is subsumed to the system's logic.

This logic destroys the planet and creates scarcity and socially-useless financial markets.

In a socialist society based on planning to meet human need, water would be a shared resource.

### Breakfast in



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## ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



# What lies behind the divisions over Brexit?

**IT'S ANYONE'S** guess whether Britain and the European Union (EU) can reach an agreement on their new trading relationship, which is due to start on 1 January.

But it's a mistake for the pro-EU liberal left to blame the impasse solely on Boris Johnson and his government, however right wing and incompetent they are. The conflict has much deeper roots.

Both Brussels and the Johnson government show a relatively coherent understanding of the stakes. The EU is a project based on the partial pooling of sovereignty among the member states under the leadership of the two main continental imperialist powers, Germany and France.

Following 75 years of hugely destructive conflict, these decided after the Second World War to cooperate.

The EU provides a framework in which they can band together the rest of Europe behind their sometimes conflicting goals. Johnson, however, represents a section of the British ruling class that believes its interests are best served by disentangling the United Kingdom from this project.

This group is almost certainly a minority of the capitalist forces operating here, but it is currently politically dominant.

"Taking back control" is not simply an ideological pipedream. Johnson and his allies believe that by regaining national sovereignty they can promote a more deregulated and competitive capitalism based in Britain.

For example, Dominic Cummings advocated removing Brussels-imposed rules blocking state subsidies to promote new hi-tech firms.

But, as the analyst Mujtaba Rahman puts it, French president Emmanuel Macron's "vision of a European industrial and innovative powerhouse is incompatible with a future few-rules Britain that would act as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' for continued American or Chinese economic domination of the EU27". The objective in the negotiations of France and other member states has been twofold.

First British firms could continue to export goods—Brussels refuses to consider services—tariff-free into the European Single Market solely on condition that Britain remains what one trade expert has called the EU's "regulatory satellite".

## Allies

Secondly, France and its allies want to use Brexit to displace the City of London as the main European financial centre.

Michel Barnier, the EU's chief negotiator, was already trying to achieve this before the 2016 referendum.

But he won't succeed, as Axel Webber chairman of UBS and ex-president of the German Bundesbank pointed out last week. He said, "The division of Europe is a massive benefit to the City of London because if Europe were united the impact of Brexit would be much more. It's all about competition between financial centres within Europe, Frankfurt against Paris."

But the battle to keep Britain tied to the Single Market and its rules continues, with Brussels using its bargaining advantage ruthlessly. The Financial Times newspaper last week listed various issues where the European Commission is refusing Britain rights it has granted non-EU states from Serbia to Switzerland. Settling these issues is used by the EU as a way of getting what it wants in the trade talks.

The strongly pro-Remain Financial Times accused it of having "a negotiating position so hawkish that even the EU car industry warned in October that it was not in its interests".

Now Macron has threatened to veto the emerging trade deal. He highlighted the issue of EU fishing rights in British waters. But what he is really worried is that Germany—represented by its chancellor, Angela Merkel, and by Commission president Ursula von der Leyen—is prepared to make too many concessions to Johnson.

Germany's ultra-competitive industry is less likely to be threatened by the emergence of a rogue British capitalism.

So the Guardian columnist George Monbiot is right to see Brexit as "the outcome of a civil war within capitalism".

He sees this as a conflict between "the two dominant forms of capitalist enterprise"—"housetrained capitalism", represented by the EU, and anti-regulation "warlord capitalism". But it's also a struggle between two blocs of capital—two second-rank imperialisms scrabbling for advantage in a crisis-haunted world.

There are no prizes for guessing who will be the losers.

**ACTIVISTS IN** east London were banned from supporting the Big Ride for Palestine

# Labour leadership attempts to crush Palestine solidarity

by NICK CLARK

THE LABOUR Party escalated its war on solidarity with Palestinians last week—banning members in east London from discussing a charity bike ride for Palestine.

Officials told two east London Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs)—where activists debate and organise—that a motion backing the Big Ride for Palestine was "out of order".

Labour-controlled Tower Hamlets council in east London denied the Big Ride permission to hold a rally in a borough park in 2019.

The motions submitted to the Poplar and Limehouse, and Bethnal Green and Bow CLPs condemned the council's decision.

The IHRA definition of antisemitism says it could be antisemitic to call Israel a racist state. This denies Palestinians their right to explain their history of persecution.

It is also used to clamp down on solidarity with them.

Despite this, Labour adopted the IHRA definition in 2018 as part of a campaign to brand left wing party members antisemitic.

Labour's general secretary—backed by leader Keir Starmer—banned CLPs from "repudiating" the definition earlier this year.

Sybil Cock from east London Palestine Solidarity Campaign told Socialist Worker, "The Labour Party is becoming a place where the ability to talk about Palestine is shrinking."

She added, "I know loads of people who've left the Labour Party over this in the last months. And I think there'll be more to come."

The ban comes amid a witch hunt of left wing Labour members.

Leading left wing Jewish activists Moshe Machover and Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi were both suspended last week.

In its suspension letter to Machover, Labour demanded

he respond to a dossier of "evidence" that he spoke out against Israel.

It includes a photograph of him at a protest boycotting an Israeli film festival event in north London.

It also includes several examples of Machover linking accusations of antisemitism to attempts to silence criticism of Israel.

Naomi was suspended after speaking at an online meeting of Chingford and Woodgreen CLP against the drive to silence the left.

The meeting had been due to debate a motion in solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn, who has been suspended as a

Labour MP. It was withdrawn after Labour's leaders said anyone who supported or debated such motions would be suspended.

Naomi and her CLP chair Gary Lefley both spoke out against the ban, in speeches leaked to right wing journalists.

Naomi said it was wrong to use accusations of antisemitism to shut down support for the left and Palestine.

"This is a dangerous road," she told the meeting. "Do we really want us Jewish members to be seen as gatekeepers—as people who prevent others from discussing issues of importance? This is serious stuff comrades."

## Israel murders Palestinian child

**ISRAELI soldiers killed a child in the West Bank as he watched a demonstration against illegal settlements that rob Palestinians of their land.**

**Residents of the settlements attack nearby Palestinian villages with increasing frequency.**

**The teenager, Ali Abu Alayya, was reportedly shot in the stomach with live ammunition fired by Israel soldiers against**

**weekly demonstrations at his village.**

**Ali is the sixth child to be killed by Israel in the West Bank this year.**

**He is the latest victim of Israel's racist war against Palestinians.**

**Ali's father Ayman said, "This is not new. We are continuously targeted—our sheep, our houses and our kids.**

**"If not by the Israeli army, it's by the settlers."**

# School students slam the plan for exams next year

by SADIE ROBINSON

## THE TORIES are pressing ahead with exams in England next year.

It means more misery for over 700,000 students due to sit GCSEs, A-Levels and other exams despite missing months of education due to coronavirus.

The government claims it will help students by providing advance information about exam topics and says that grades will be “boosted”.

East London GCSE student Fred said the Tory plans are “ridiculous”.

He told Socialist Worker the measures don’t make up for “losing six months of school, as well as two, three and four periods of isolation”.

“You can see no one feels positive about these measures,” he said.

“They won’t do anything to address the added stress of exams.”

Fred is one of many students who have had to self-isolate since returning to school in September.

The number of students out of school because of virus outbreaks recently doubled in a week (see page 4).

## Chaotic

Fred said school has been “disrupted and chaotic with feelings of insecurity and not knowing what is going to happen”.

Repeated government U-turns mean more uncertainty. “We have a gut feeling of almost fear,” said Fred.

The government says providing information on exam topics will cut the amount of work and revision for students.

But students won’t get that information before January.

NEU union president Robin Bevan said schools still don’t know how many topics they will be told about.

“Not knowing this until next year means students and teachers may now be ‘misusing’ their time, catching up on content that isn’t required for the exam,” he said.

Fred said the government should do more to support students.

“There should be government-funded sessions where students can talk to a professional about their insecurities and clear their head space,” he said.

And he argued that exams should be cancelled.

“It would take a lot of stress off students who are already coping with so much,” he said.

Governments in Scotland and Wales have said that some exams will be cancelled next year.

Yet Tory education secretary Gavin Williamson said he could “absolutely” guarantee that exams in England would go ahead.

He claimed the measures announced last week will make exams “as fair as possible”.

But the exams won’t be fair—and poorer students will be hit the hardest.

“I think the changes will bring some benefit, but it will still be far worse than previous years,” said Fred.

## Eton

“Private schools like Eton will benefit far more because they are in low infection areas and are not self-isolating like we are.

“In Tower Hamlets, infection rates are so much higher.

“My year group has already been off twice and we are one of the least affected. The changes will benefit the more privileged.”

**A LEVEL students protest against rigged exam results earlier this year**

## University revolts spread

**UNIVERSITY RENT strikes are spreading after Manchester university students forced the administration to reduce their rent by 30 percent.**

Students in Bristol organised a banner drop outside university accommodation last Friday to push for rent reductions and for an end to student tuition fees.

And in Manchester hundreds of students rallied and marched to call for better treatment of students by the university.

They also held a “Cops off Campus” protest on Sunday.

Students said there was an “excessive” police presence

with “mounted police, riot vans and tactical aid units” present.

Rent strikes have been announced at Sussex university, Nottingham university, Glasgow university, Manchester Metropolitan university, Oxford university and Goldsmiths university in south east London.

At Queen Mary university in east London students held a protest last Wednesday to highlight what they said was appalling treatment by the university.

Most were first years who have already been confined to their rooms for months.

Read the full report online at [bit.ly/StudentsRevoltDignity](https://bit.ly/StudentsRevoltDignity)

## Grenfell

## Makers knew insulation was unsafe

FLAMMABLE insulation was used in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower under an outdated safety test, the inquiry into the 2016 fire has heard.

The Grenfell inquiry heard that K15—a plastic insulation created by Kingspan and used on the tower—passed its safety test in 2005.

But the results were withdrawn after Kingspan changed the insulation’s chemical composition of K15 in 2006.

When the new version was tested “the Building Research Establishment had to extinguish the test early because it was endangering setting fire to the laboratory.”

Yet Kingspan kept selling K15 using the 2005 test information.

The BBA board that issues certificates for construction products contacted the company in 2008 to change the safety certificate it had given K15.

But former technical project manager Ivor Meredith’s boss, Phil Heath, told the BBA it would pass on any associated costs to them.

Heath urged Meredith to ignore the email, and “let the file gather dust”. They did not want their sales to be affected.

In 2009 Kingspan was given a certification from the Local Authority Building Control. It said K15 “can be considered a material of limited combustibility”.

Kingspan knew K15 could never meet this standard, but celebrated the result.

Several clients also questioned K15’s suitability. Contractor Bowmer and Kirkland emailed Heath, noting that Kingspan appeared “to be relying wholly” on the 2005 test.

Heath wrote to a friend, “I think Bowmer & Kirkland... are getting me confused with someone who gives a damn.”

Testing was recommended in 2014 and eventually the insulation passed. But the insulation tested was not K15.

Kingspan dropped the new trial product and used the test to continue selling the fatal K15.

**Isabel Ringrose**



**What’s your story?**

Email with your ideas  
[reports@socialistworker.co.uk](mailto:reports@socialistworker.co.uk)



# Global virus deaths pass 1.5 million milestone

Grim figures from across the world show that transmission of Covid-19 is speeding up, says **Sarah Bates**

**THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic has reached a grisly milestone—over 1.5 million deaths worldwide from the virus.**

People across the globe continue to pay the price as governments fail to control the spread of Covid-19.

Cases in Iran have soared past one million, with over 50,000 deaths recorded. Lockdown measures are being eased despite hundreds of deaths a day.

In the capital Tehran, rules were relaxed from last Saturday. As non-essential businesses re-opened, people crammed into packed metro station and into buses.

The situation continues to worsen in the US. The country has declared over 282,000 Covid-19 deaths, and more than 14.8 million cases.

Transmission of the virus is speeding up. It took 100 days to reach the first one million cases. The US recorded one million new cases in a five-day period last week.

Health workers are struggling to cope, as the nation recorded 100,000 hospitalisations for the first time.

Dr Robert Redfield from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said around 90 percent of hospitals were in danger of overflowing.

## Rough

“December and January and February are going to be rough times,” he said. “I believe they’re going to be the most difficult in the public health history of this nation.”

Despite this, outgoing president Donald Trump has refused to roll out any national restrictions—or support for struggling workers impacted by closures.

It’s left to state governments to implement patchwork legislation on local lockdowns. In Los Angeles, mayor Eric Garcetti issued a sweeping order banning most activities outside of the house.

California governor Gavin Newsom declared the US’s harshest coronavirus restrictions, as cases hit a record high in the state.

## BACK STORY

**More than 1.5 million people have now died from coronavirus**

● The horrific figure is an indictment of how the rich have presided over a deadly system

● Some countries, such as Iran, are easing lockdown restrictions despite hundreds of daily deaths

● Elsewhere the scale of the pandemic has forced states to reimpose lockdown measures

● And while the Tories’ talk of ‘saving’ Christmas, not every country is allowing more mixing

Some 23 million people in Southern California have been ordered to stay at home and avoid contact with other households for three weeks.

In Europe, German chancellor Angela Merkel has extended a lockdown for three more weeks, as the country battles a daily death toll that is now significantly higher than rates in April.

Greece has also extended its second lockdown by a week.

Not every country is relaxing restrictions for the festive period. In Italy, the government has approved new measures banning movement between regions from 21 December until 6 January.

It’s also set to implement a ban on people moving between towns on 25, 26 December and 1 January.

“If we let down our guard now, the third wave is just around the corner,” health minister Roberto Speranza said.

This year will be remembered as one marked by one of the greatest public health crises ever known.

It should not be forgotten that the rich and powerful presided over a capitalist system that failed to protect ordinary people.



**On other pages...**

Indian farmers join mass action  
 >>>Page 17

**HEALTH WORKERS** outside a California hospital. US hospitals risk being overwhelmed by Covid-19 cases

## Protesters face repression in France

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

**AROUND 100,000 people joined 90 demonstrations across France last Saturday against the government’s repressive global security law.**

In many places there were also separate marches against unemployment and for precarious workers’ rights.

The new law seeks to create a new criminal offence of publishing images of police officers “with the aim of damaging their physical or psychological integrity”.

This would include images of police acting violently against protesters. Offenders would face a maximum penalty of up to one

year in prison and a £40,000 fine.

Over 6,000 police and gendarmes surrounded the Paris demonstration and attacked parts of it with tear gas.

In Bordeaux police used water cannons.

President Emmanuel Macron has tried to blunt resistance to it by promising a review before the law is passed.

But his record is one of backing the cops and rampant Islamophobia.

The French government is targeting Muslim places of worship and 18 mosques may be closed.

For a longer version of this article go to [bit.ly/37GpLhB](https://bit.ly/37GpLhB)

**A protester in France**

## Greek cops target socialists

GREEK police arrested more than 100 people, including leading members of the Socialist Workers Party, at a rally on Sunday.

Cops broke up a commemoration for teenager Alexander Grigoropoulos, who was shot dead by a police officer in 2008.

Those arrested were crammed into buses and crowded

police stations. They included health workers and leading trade union activists, as well as lawyers from the successful prosecution of Golden Dawn, Thanasis Kampagiannis and Costas Papadakis.

Socialist councillors Katerina Thoidou and Petros Constantinou, and the editor of Socialist Worker’s sister newspaper

Workers Solidarity, Panos Garganas, were also arrested.

Police accused the commemoration of breaking lockdown restrictions, but those arrested were released without charge.

The arrests came as Greece’s Tory-type government is trying to force through attacks on trade union organisation and the right to protest.



## Jingoistic vaccine lie

TORY hypocritical bullshit plumbs new depths.

Having delivered us never-ending helpings of Eton Viral Mess at a cost of 75,000 lives, Tory ministers are now proclaiming that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine represents a major British triumph.

The reality is that the science was pioneered and developed by two dedicated oncologists, Ugur Sahin and Ozlem Tureci.

Their families migrated from Turkey to Germany 50 years ago in pursuit of a better life.

Ugur's father was a "gastarbeiter" at the Ford plant in Cologne.

If Matt Hancock and Gavin Williamson had anything to do with it, neither of these brilliant scientists would have been allowed to cross the Turkish border.

John Murphy  
Stockport

## Put at risk for profit

I AM very worried about the news from the US.

It's expected that there will be a "surge" of Covid-19 cases following Thanksgiving.

Meanwhile our government thinks it's a good idea for us to mix over Christmas.

They just want to make sure that Christmas spending goes ahead, regardless of how many more of us will die as a result.

Linda Barrett  
Sheffield



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

# Don't be demoralised, get organised at work instead

IT IS easy to get demoralised with politics in Britain given the strength of the populist right and the weakness of the Labour Party.

However there is no evidence that, as a result, there is hostility to trade unionism.

From my own experience in the GMB union, I have noticed increasing support.

Recently the GMB has won trade union recognition at Paccor, a large packaging manufacturing company in County Durham.

This is despite the difficulties organising as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

In the summer the company tried to cut overtime working and introduce a system of banked

hours, which would have resulted in big pay cuts for many workers.

The GMB only had three or four members in the factory at the time.

Our trade union branch was approached and asked if we could help.

We acted quickly and considerable effort was put into recruitment both inside and outside the factory gates, using both leaflets and one to one discussion.

Whilst one of the full-time organisers played a very effective role, it was rank and file members who really got the ball rolling.

Within a few weeks more than two thirds of the shop floor

workforce had signed up to the GMB. The company then agreed to recognition.

So what lessons are there for trade unionists and socialists?

Despite a hostile political climate, workers will join trade unions if asked and they feel that it will make a difference.

Furthermore, wasting your time and energy on trying to pass resolutions in the Labour Party or jockeying for positions in Constituency Labour Parties is fruitless.

By contrast building trade union organisation can bring real benefits to the working class.

John Gilmore  
County Durham

## Supermarkets have a way to go on racism

THE IMPACT of Black Lives Matter (BLM) is all over our TV screens.

If you watch broadcast TV you won't have missed the supermarket Xmas adverts featuring black families.

This is to be welcomed after the backlash from the racist corners of social media.

However, a quick look at the board of Sainsbury's shows there aren't quite so many black faces—I counted one.

So the supermarkets

have a long way to go.

But ultimately black faces in high places—or on our TV screens—is not going to eradicate racism.

The same street power that fuelled BLM is the force that will really make lasting change.

We have to get rid of the unequal society that supermarkets and other corporates represent—the capitalist system that birthed racism in the first place.

Gary McFarlane  
North London

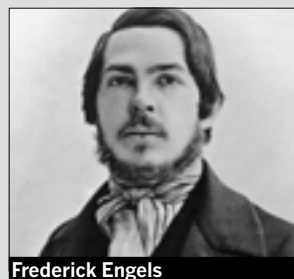
## Engels showed oppression isn't natural

I WOULD like to add to Sarah Bates' excellent article about Frederick Engels (Socialist Worker, 2 December).

Engels' short book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, provided an indispensable approach for Marxists.

It rejects a form of biological reductionism about women's oppression and the view that women have always been in an inferior position to men.

Although much of the data Engels relied on is



Frederick Engels

outdated, his key propositions remain valid.

Crucially he argues that human beings lived in egalitarian pre-class societies. And that "the world historic defeat of the female sex" occurred

as a consequence of changes in the way humans produced their living.

These changes led to the monogamous family, the rise of classes and the state.

This view, once widely accepted amongst Marxists, is now being rejected.

This opens up the door to explanations that rely on women's reproductive capacity as the key determinant of women's oppression.

Sheila McGregor  
East London

Just a thought...

## Unacceptable face of system

WE'RE SEEING what used to be known as "The unacceptable face of capitalism" (We're made to pay the price of an ugly system, 2 December).

Thanks to Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and others all the restraints, protection and checks have been removed.

Government has forgotten its role is to care for the population it's supposed to serve, and has allowed, and encouraged, greed and asset stripping.

Alan Kingston  
On Facebook

## Is Starmer the new Stalin?

APPARENTLY the general secretary of the Labour Party has written to all local parties telling them they are banned from discussing Jeremy Corbyn's loss of the party whip in parliament.

Readers may recall that Stalin tried to ensure that Leon Trotsky was a non-person.

It is marvellous to see where the Labour leadership draws its inspiration from.

Terry Ward  
Essex

## Should cops be defunded?

WE NEED to defund the police (Troublemaker, 2 December).

Andres Viveros  
On Facebook

● YES AND then people will be afraid to go out for fear of violence.

Defunding won't solve any problems they'll only make it worse.

Walter Nicholson  
On Facebook

● DEFUNDING doesn't mean abolition.

It's the channelling of funds to other important community support organisations, better suited to dealing with certain issues than the police are.

Jo Hudson  
On Facebook

## Don't forget the prisoners

THE GOVERNMENT says vulnerable people will be first in line for a Covid-19 vaccine.

But there is no mention of prisoners—a highly vulnerable group.

Maggie Elliott  
North Yorkshire



Murders, torture and massacres—that’s the reality of the war in Afghanistan exposed by a report into Australian war crimes. And for all its denial, Britain is just as guilty, writes **Isabel Ringrose**

**RECENTLY revealed atrocities by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan were a brutal reminder that—19 years after the invasion—Western armies are still terrorising the country.**

Stories of what Australian soldiers did—told in the recently published Brereton Report—are gut wrenching.

They include accounts of how soldiers, after entering a village, “Would take the men and boys to these guest houses and interrogate them, meaning tie them up and torture them.

“When the soldiers left the village, ‘the men and boys would be found dead, shot in the head, sometimes blindfolded and throats slit. These are corroborated accounts.’”

One account “describes allegations that two ‘14 year old boys suspected of being Taliban sympathisers had their throats slit.

“The bodies were bagged and thrown into a nearby river”.

It’s a rare glimpse of the truth of what the West’s wars actually mean. And we shouldn’t allow the focus on Australia to let Britain’s occupying forces off the hook.

While Australia has been forced to shine a spotlight on its atrocities, Britain has done its best to keep its own under wraps.

And there’s a lot to cover up—almost two decades’ worth.

Last year the BBC reported a story of how British special forces soldiers murdered two Afghan children in 2012. It bears chilling resemblance to the crimes of the Australians.

At 8pm, British and Afghan soldiers burst into a family home in the village of Loy Bagh and opened fire. A 12 year old, Ahmad Shah, and 14 year old Mohammed Tayeb were staying there overnight with 17 year old Naik Mohammed and his brother, Fazel.

After the soldiers left, a witness said, “When I entered the room I saw bones and teeth all over the place. The four of them were lying there, blood everywhere.”

**Encouraged**

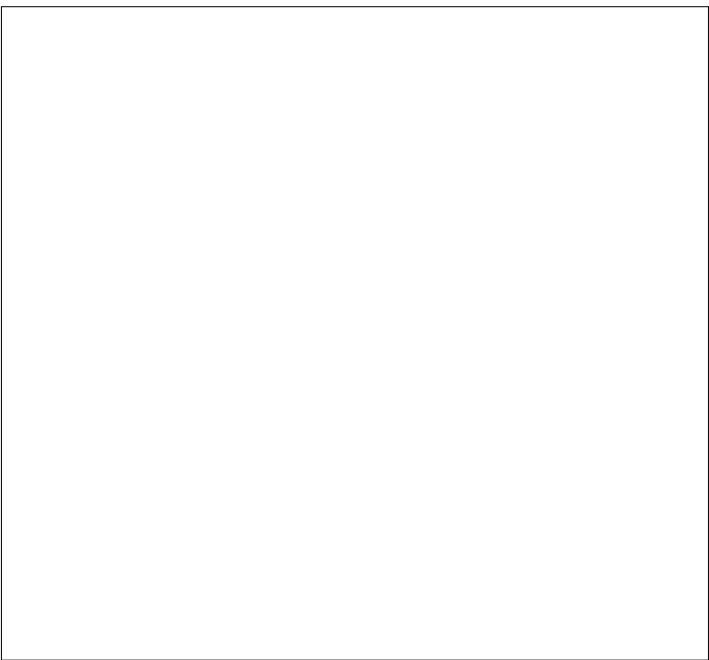
It’s the sort of violence that occurs in a war where brutality is encouraged from the top down. Britain’s whole occupation is built on it.

Britain operated a secret prison in Afghanistan at its Camp Bastion base where it held Afghans indefinitely and without charge.

It supported the US in running secret prisons for unlawful detention and



**Afghan prisoners were ‘routinely’ handed over to US forces knowing they would be tortured**



torture. It officially denies this and remains as silent as possible—but it’s an open secret.

The best known prison is the Bagram airbase or “The Hangar”.

US lawyer Tina Foster, who argued several cases on behalf of Bagram detainees, says that “Bagram was worse than Guantanamo” and “has always been a torture chamber”.

One former British special forces officer said that “hundreds” of individuals have been detained by British forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Tortured**

They were “routinely” handed over to US forces in the knowledge that they would be tortured. The fact that such places existed shows the hypocrisy of those who claimed the war was started on “humanitarian” grounds.

They draw up laws to supposedly ban such atrocities and make their wars seem legitimate, just and civilised.

Then they build armies, prisons and torture camps to break those laws.

The culprits named in the Brereton report were Australian special forces. That supposedly means they’re the most highly trained and disciplined troops.

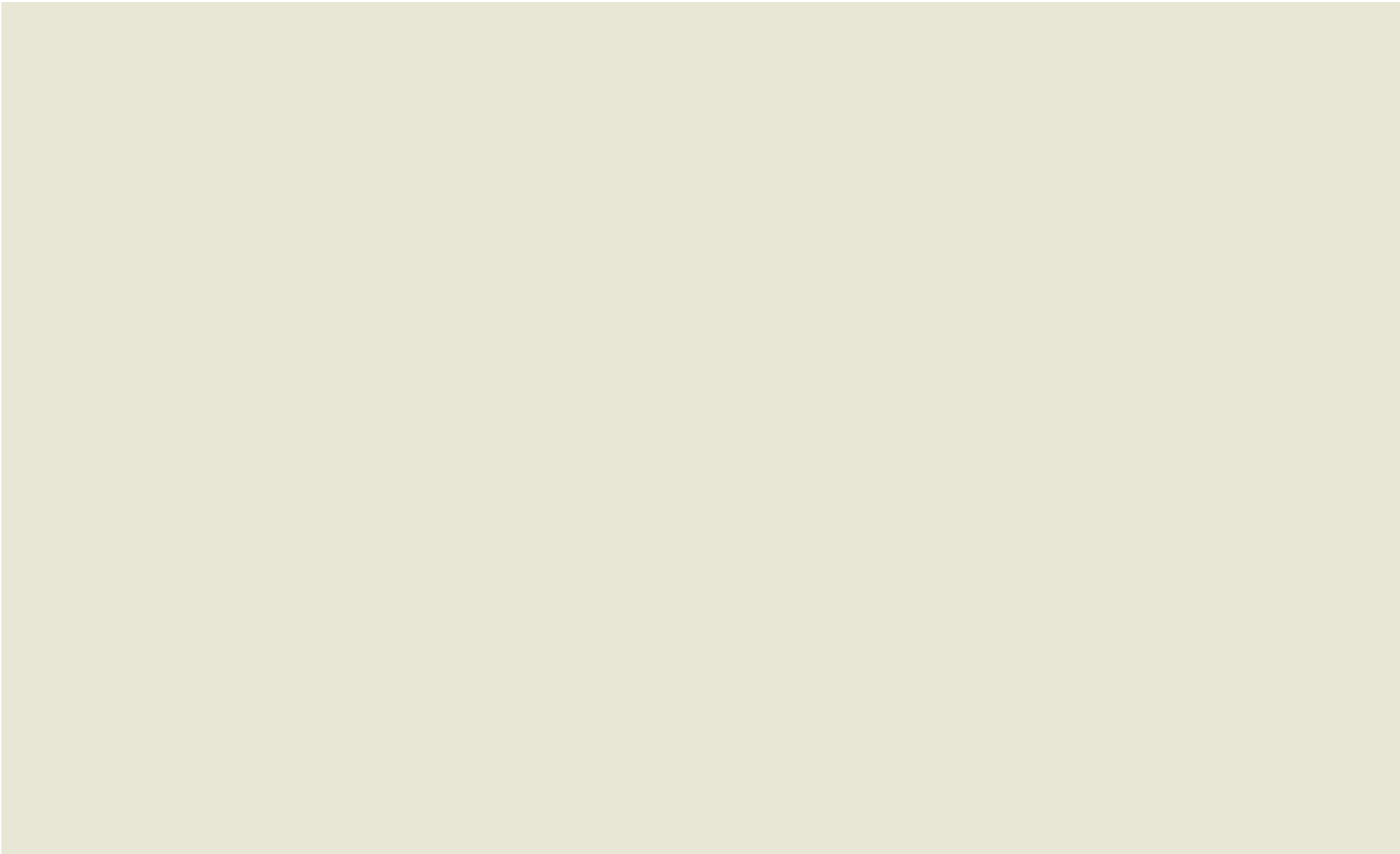
It really means they’re specially trained to murder and dehumanise their victims. The culture the report reveals is the result.

Special forces saw themselves as beyond scrutiny with a sense of elite entitlement. The report found evidence of 39 murders of non-combatants, civilians, and prisoners in 23 incidents by 25 Australian soldiers—either as principals, accessories, or at their instruction.

Soldiers used Afghan civilians as “target practice”. They would then plant weapons on dead civilians to give the illusion they were combatants, in a practice called “throwdowns”.

Junior soldiers were also required by superiors to murder prisoners as their first kill—known as “bleeding”. And photographs of a senior special forces soldier drinking alcohol out of the prosthetic leg of a dead Taliban fighter circulated a week after the report was

**THE Brereton Report into Australian military atrocities in Afghanistan is heavily redacted but is still causing a political crisis (above) Angus Campbell, Australia’s highest ranking military official, was forced to “unreservedly” apologise to the Afghan people (below) An entire Australian SAS(R) squadron has been “disbanded” due to allegations of war crimes (right, below)**



# WAR CRIMES

## THE WEST’S HIDDEN HORRORS IN AFGHANISTAN

released.

Officers higher up in the rankings knew what was going on. Such cases are not one offs in an otherwise justifiable war. And that’s precisely why Britain wants to cover up its own crimes.

After the Brereton report was released, the British Ministry of Defence (MOD) said, “Our armed forces are held to the highest standards, and the Service Police have carried out extensive and independent investigations into alleged misconduct of UK forces in Afghanistan.”

There is plenty of evidence that shows this isn’t true—but measures are put in place from the top to cover them up.

For example the government is pushing through a new law to protect soldiers’ reputations—and its own.

The Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill was

introduced to parliament in March 2020.

It provides legal protections to armed forces personnel and veterans serving in military operations overseas. These troops cannot be prosecuted due to alleged offences committed on overseas military operations more than five years ago.

**Investigation**

Soldiers will be extremely unlikely to face court action relating to the war in Afghanistan. The government also closed Operation Northmoor in 2017. This was the official investigation of British Special Forces in Afghanistan, set up in 2014 to examine criminal allegations.

At its peak it investigated 675 criminal allegations from 159 complainants, including 52 accusations of wrongful deaths.

It was supposed to run until 2021. But

the MOD pushed for its early closure, as well as the investigation into crimes committed in Iraq.

This meant accusations being investigated were abandoned and key Afghan witnesses were not interviewed. Any charges made had to be dropped and no case investigated led to a prosecution.

One detective said, “The Ministry of Defence had no intention of prosecuting any soldier of whatever rank he was unless it was absolutely necessary, and they couldn’t wriggle their way out of it.”

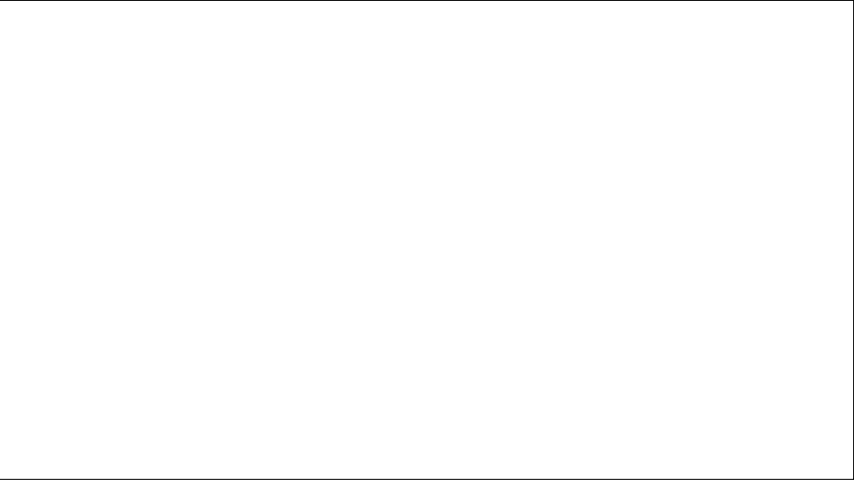
Operation Northmoor was investigating dozens of suspicious killings on night raids. One included the killings of three children and a young man in 2012 by British soldiers. It was widely reported that higher authorities tried to cover this up.

At the height of the war in Afghanistan

in 2011 two senior officers from Special Forces reported that troops had adopted a “deliberate policy” of illegally killing unarmed men.

Reports came in of execution-style killings, which matched a sharp rise in the number of “enemies killed in action”.

And as more stories of murdered teenagers come to light, it seems even that phrase hides a horrible truth.



Afghan women injured by US airstrikes is treated in Kunduz hospital

## Imperialist conflict justified by phoney ‘humanitarian’ morality

**BRITAIN AND the US justified the invasion as a war of “humanitarian intervention”. It was really part of a plan to reassert the US’s control of the Middle East and beyond.**

They invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, following the attacks on the World Trade Centre that September.

The US’s explanation for invasion was to hunt Biden Laden in Afghanistan. But the ultimate aim was to build towards an invasion of Iraq. It was part of the “war on terror” used to justify military invasions, and which also gave rise to rampant Islamophobia.

Britain used its involvement to prop up its standing as the US’s junior partner.

General Sir Richard Dannatt, then Chief of the General Staff, said in 2009 that Britain’s “military reputation and credibility, unfairly or not, have been called into question at several levels in the eyes of our most important ally as a result of some aspects of the Iraq campaign”.

**Credibility**

Britain had to take pivotal “steps to restore this credibility”.

To justify the cost of life and \$37 billion in resources spent in Afghanistan, British government officials said they were fighting to prevent terrorist attacks in Britain. But rulers do not care about improving the lives of people anywhere. They care for profits, power and world domination.

They claimed that the war was a justified cause to defend democracy and human rights—in particular women’s rights—from the threat of the Taliban. The British state wanted

**Control**

In 2009, then president Barack Obama and vice-president Joe Biden sent an additional 17,000 US troops to add to the 36,000 already there. They continued to heap more soldiers in, and by 2011 some 100,000 US troops were in Afghanistan.

Then, in 2017, Donald Trump increased troops by 50 percent.

Western soldiers are still there because their governments are desperate to keep control of the mess they created.

The Afghan government propped up by the West is filled with corruption. The ruling elite put in place by the US profits from industrial-scale opium production.

The country is heavily dependent on foreign aid, and citizens suffer from shortages of clean water and electricity.

In February Donald Trump signed a conditional peace deal with the Taliban that would see US troops withdraw from Afghanistan within 14 months.

This humiliating defeat shows that the US could never win in Afghanistan—and billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of lives have been wasted attempting to prove otherwise.

But the Afghan government was kept out of the negotiations.

So Taliban and Afghan forces continue the bloody warfare while the world powers responsible pat themselves on the back.



**In 2009 president Obama sent an additional 17,000 US troops—on top of the 36,000 already there**

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

## INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

## REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

## THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

## INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

## Socialist Workers Party online meetings



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.

## PRO-CHOICE PROTESTS in Poland have shaken the establishment

{ SOCIALIST WORKER }  
ONLINE MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and local interventions. All welcome.

## BIRMINGHAM

**France — Macron, racism and Islamophobia**

Wed 16 Dec, 7pm

281-634-5938

## BLACK COUNTRY

**Politics of the mind —**

**Marxism and mental distress**

Wed 16 Dec, 7.30pm

352-891-2411

## BRADFORD

**Is anarchism more radical than socialism?**

Thu 17 Dec, 7pm

885-9187-7552

## BRIGHTON AND HOVE

**From Warsaw to**

**Washington — the global**

**fight for abortion rights**

Thu 17 Dec, 6.30pm

818-1857-1448

## BRISTOL

**Engels at 200 — a celebration**

Thu 17 Dec, 7.30pm

688-397-3148

## BURNLEY AND PENDLE

**Is there a North/**

**South divide?**

Wed 16 Dec, 7.30pm

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## CAMBRIDGE

**A very socialist quiz**

Thu 17 Dec, 7.30pm

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## CARDIFF

**Seasonal social**

Wed 16 Dec, 7.30pm

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## CHESTERFIELD

**When music fought**

**the system**

Thu 17 Dec,

6.30pm

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## DUNDEE, ABERDEEN &amp; PERTH

**South Africa — the**

**struggle today**

Wed 16 Dec, 7.30pm

894-2628-7708

## EAST MIDLANDS

**Seasonal Social Quiz**

Wed 16 Dec,

7pm

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## EXETER

**Fighting for abortion**

**rights — from Poland to**

**the US and Britain**

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**What would socialism**

**look like?**

Thu 17 Dec,

6.30pm

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## HUDDERSFIELD

**Conspiracy theories and**

**the far right — how should**

**socialists respond?**

Thu 17 Dec, 7pm

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## KENT

**Marxism and religion**

Thu 17 Dec,

8.15pm

434-623-8064

## LEEDS

**Socialism and Christmas**

Thu 17 Dec, 7pm

935-5290-8076

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**Marxism and mental distress**

Wed 16 Dec, 7pm

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**How should we remember**

**Mary Wollstonecraft?**

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## LONDON: HARINGEY

**Police racism and the**

**Mangrove Nine**

Wed 16 Dec, 7.30pm

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## LONDON: ISLINGTON

**Art and Revolution**

Thu 17 Dec, 7pm

874-012-7970

## LONDON: NEWHAM

**Soundtrack to the**

**struggle — the music**

**of South Africa**

Wed 16 Dec, 7.30pm

288-098-8827

## LONDON: SOUTH

**Seasonal Social Quiz**

Wed 16 Dec, 7pm

497-196-1801

## LONDON: SOUTH EAST

**Seasonal Social**

Thu 17 Dec, 7pm

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## LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

**Engels at 200 — a celebration**

**of his revolutionary**

**life and work**

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## LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

**Rock Against Racism — a**

**retrospective**

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543-023-057

## LONDON: WEST AND

**NORTH WEST**

**Soundtrack to the**

**struggle — music**

**and resistance**

Thu 17 Dec,

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## MANCHESTER

**From populism to**

**fascism — how do we**

**defeat the far right?**

Wed 16 Dec,

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**How can Palestine be free?**

Wed 16 Dec, 7pm

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**Police racism and the**

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**YORKSHIRE**

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**South divide?**

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**The Super Socialist**

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**Christmas' quiz**

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# The Racer shows the truth behind cycling glamour

This new film is set over 20 years ago, but the pressures on athletes remain the same today. **Nick Clark** recommends this visceral look into the elite sport

PROFESSIONAL SPORT is full of dubious mythology, and cycling is one of the worst offenders.

New film *The Racer* opens with the words of the sport's most glorified hero Eddy Merckx: "The race is won by the rider who can suffer the most."

It's a quote often used to conjure up romantic images of grimacing men grinding up mountains on heavy steel bikes or battling through cold Belgian rain.

*The Racer* uses it to show the sordid truth of what it actually means to "suffer the most"—and what that has to do with one of sport's biggest scandals.

Dom Chabol is woken by the warning beeps of his heart monitor and crawls onto the indoor cycling trainer at the foot of his bed. He stands in front of his hotel room mirror pinching at the non-existent fat on his body.

Then he walks down the corridor for an injection of the dangerous banned drug EPO.

This is a fictional story set during the 1998 Tour de France, beleaguered by real life doping scandals. At the age of 39, it's also likely to be Dom's last big race.

At the end of a career riding in support of others, Dom's health is showing the strain.

The doping is the biggest danger—it threatens to kill him in his sleep. But that's not all.

Dom is covered in the scars left by broken bones he's sustained in crashes. His immune system is weakened.

And his body has been moulded to the point of deformity, his stomach seeming to cave in below his chest.

It's said that doping isn't endemic in cycling as it used to be. If that's



**DOM** (left) is left battered and bruised in every way by the industry

true, it's because the slew of scandals threatened to drive away the sponsors who fund the whole thing and whose demand for wins encouraged doping in the first place.

But everything else—the depression, the disordered eating, the horrific crashes—haven't gone away.

You might question *The Racer's*

appeal. Do you really want to watch another film about a flawed man moping through an existential crisis? Let alone one set within a sport dominated by affluent white blokes.

But the film has more to say and you don't have to be into cycling to appreciate it.

It's about someone who's given his life to an industry—a "circus"—that's wrecked him and now wants to throw him away.

That's the "suffering" professional sport doesn't like to talk about so much.

*The Racer* is on streaming platforms and in cinemas from 18 December.

## Don McCullin photos show reality of war and poverty

### EXHIBITION

#### DON MCCULLIN

At Tate Liverpool, Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4BB  
Until 9 May 2021

IT IS not often that when critiquing war we can look straight into the eyes of those most affected.

This is what the Tate Liverpool's exhibition cataloguing Don McCullin's work from 1958 to the present day has to offer.

It highlights the true impact on the lives of

those fighting in or living through conflict internationally or even in British streets and council estates.

The Tate's exhibition displays over 200 photographs hand printed in McCullin's darkroom.

They show everything from London gangs to his most recent landscape photographs taken during his retirement.

Each room depicts a different location of McCullin's photography, the first covers his early work in London, the next



Liverpool 1970

the formation of the Berlin Wall.

It moves into the civil war in Cyprus and further rooms looks at conflict in Northern Ireland and the Vietnam War.

Some of the most powerful images come from his time spent in the north of England, including in Liverpool.

The shift in focus moves from the brutality of war to showing the brutality of modern poverty.

Seeing these images, it could have been in a war-stricken country and

not the city where the exhibition is shown.

And the horrific poverty these people were living in gives the same emotional response as seeing the effects of war.

One of his most famous photographs is of a US soldier in Vietnam who is clearly experiencing "shell shock", now known as post-traumatic stress disorder.

The image stares at you from across the room and brought me to tears on first viewing.

*Sky Golding*

### EXHIBITION

#### CONNECTED BY LIGHT

Until 27 February  
Canary Wharf, London, E14

COLOURFUL NIGHTS is the latest annual festival illuminating large parts of Canary Wharf in east London.

Usually the larger Winter Lights festival takes place, but instead a scaled back event featuring a handful of illuminations will be seen this year.

Nine large artworks, designed to be seen from afar so viewers can socially distance, are dotted throughout the area.

The Curious Fluorous piece by artist duo Baker and Borowski promises "selfie moments aplenty" as it updates the Alice in



Lighting up east London

Wonderland tale for the modern day.

And Parker Heyl casts an eye at the realities of quarantine and social distancing in his piece Office Party, which looks at what happens in workplaces after people have left.

Jubilee Park hosts a poetry trial, several hundred networked orbs can be seen in Montgomery Square, and a tree has been transformed into a neon showpiece in Canada Square Park.

### TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

- Chosen by God**  
John Newsinger
- Dialectics of Art**  
John Molyneux
- Sylvia Pankhurst—Natural Born Rebel**  
Rachel Holmes
- Does Privilege Explain Racism?**  
Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Esme Choonara
- Black Jacobins**  
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**F**OR working class people there's one thing worse than being exploited by their boss. And that's not being exploited under capitalism.

This is the situation vast swathes of people across Britain have suddenly been thrust into.

Young people have been particularly badly hit by unemployment this year, and had their futures dramatically torn away.

For the older generation sacked during the coronavirus pandemic, many will never work again.

Millions of workers across the world face mass unemployment as bosses try to make them pay for the coronavirus crisis.

More than 1.6 million people are already out of work in Britain—and that number could surge to 2.6 million by the middle of next year.

Redundancies are at a record high—some 314,000 people were laid off in the three months to September. Many more are suffering on zero hours or casual contracts.

Some 25,000 jobs went at just two retailers last week, as Arcadia entered into administration and Debenhams announced it was shutting up shop.

While unemployment means poverty and wasted lives for working class people, capitalists such as Arcadia boss Philip Green sun themselves on multimillion pound yachts.

It's the sort of situation Karl Marx observed when he wrote that capitalism "establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation" of profits."

He said that "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole."

### Violent

Marx argued unemployment wasn't just down to "violent fluctuations", such as a volatile stock market, problems within a particular sector or an economic downturn.

It's rooted in "capitalist accumulation itself" which "constantly produces a relatively redundant working population, a population which is superfluous to capital's average requirements" for more growth.

He called this a "reserve army of labour", made up of unemployed and underemployed people who want to work. But the reason they're jobless isn't because there's a lack of socially-useful work to be done.

This situation would be totally irrational in a society based on planning to meet human need. Yet it's perfectly logical under capitalism, where rival bosses compete to

accumulate as greater a chunk of capital as possible.

Mainstream economists claim profit is a "reward" for the risk capitalists take by making investments. But what's become clearer throughout the lockdowns, is that bosses rely on workers' labour for profits.

While workers' labour is the source of value, they don't get paid back in wages the full value of what they create. Marx called this process exploitation and the gap "surplus value",

which capitalists' profits are based on.

Today capitalism relies on large numbers of workers who aren't directly producing value. But they are still crucial to keeping the system running and they are exploited.

NHS or state school workers, for instance, are still necessary to maintain a healthy and skilled workforce.

So if bosses need to exploit workers to grab profit, why does their system create and

rely on unemployment?

Bosses don't exploit workers just because they're greedy.

They are locked into competition with one another and this forces them to plough their profits into new technology and more efficient methods of production. If they didn't do it, they would be driven out of business by their competitors.

This leads to a system, as Marx put it, of "accumulation for accumulation sake".

It means firms invest more into new machinery, technologies or infrastructure than into employing workers.

The new technologies are likely to lead to higher productivity—how much workers produce per hour.

This should mean less work and more leisure time for ordinary people. But under capitalism, it means layoffs and making those who remain in the job work harder.

This mechanisation, automation and overworking of the employed contribute to creating a reserve army of labour.

**T**ODAY some sections of big business are looking at coronavirus as an opportunity to invest into robot technologies, shedding large parts of their workforces.

One survey by the EY consultancy found 41 percent of businesses worldwide were speeding up plans to replace jobs with new technologies.

Another forecast from the consultants McKinsey predicts that automation could replace 53 million jobs in Europe by 2030, which is around 20 percent of the workforce.

Retail, manufacturing and hospitality are set to see the biggest reductions in workers.

To restore profitability and set capitalism up for the next boom, huge chunks of capital have to go to the wall during crisis. If this happens, working class people pay the price with their jobs and livelihoods.

For capitalists, it's also a crisis if there's mass unemployment across the economy. But at the same time, unemployment gives them flexibility to restructure capitalism at workers' expense, and lay the ground for future growth.

Firstly, a reserve army of labour can help smooth the cycle of boom and bust.

Marx argued that, having been created by capitalist accumulation, the reserve army of labour becomes "the lever of capitalist accumulation".

Capitalist production isn't based on planning to meet social needs—it's left up to the anarchy of the market to allocate labour and resources.

Bosses don't just invest profits into their own firm or industry. If another sector looks more lucrative, they'll invest into it in order to get a slice of the action.

A reserve army means bosses

have a readily available pool of workers to exploit as more profitable bits of the economy expand.

Secondly, a large number of unemployed people allows capitalists to discipline employed workers.

The threat of unemployment helps bosses keep workers scared of asking for a pay rise or better terms and conditions.

If they do, the bosses' argument goes, someone else will happily take their place.

The Tories are clearly using that divide and rule strategy between the public and private sectors. When ministers announced a public sector pay freeze last month, they could point to tens of thousands of job losses in retail.

### Wages

And private sector bosses can also use the jobs massacre to keep down their own workers' wages.

Even when there isn't a crisis, unemployment can have a negative impact on pay. There are big differences in wage levels across sectors. Other factors, such as sexism and racism, play an important part in pay gaps.

And workers' struggles can force bosses to concede pay rises. But a reserve army of labour still helps to drag down average wages.

Today, all the flaws of the capitalist system are on show.

Coronavirus was the trigger for the slump, but global capitalism was already weak and headed for a recession before the pandemic.

The financial crisis of 2008-10 was rooted in a crisis of profitability. But unprofitable bits of capital weren't cleared out. Governments, central banks and bosses feared allowing big companies to collapse would result in a depression.

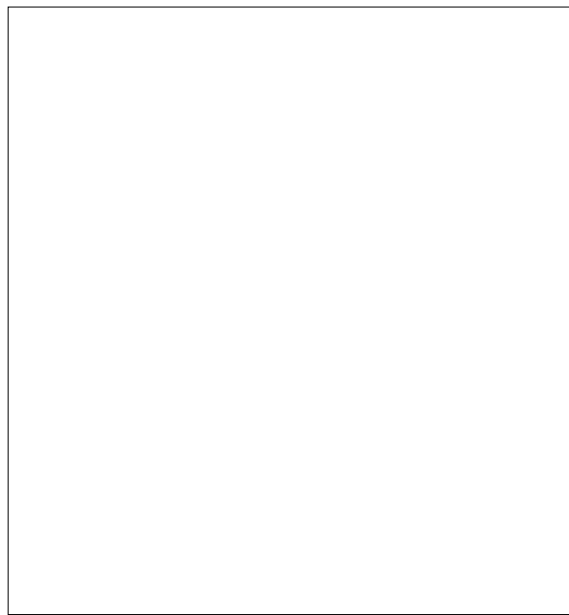
So instead, they pumped cheap credit into the system.

But cheap credit led to a growth of "zombie companies"—heavily indebted firms which only survived because of easy loans. And this time the burden of debt and lockdowns has pushed some of the zombies over the edge, helping to fuel the mass unemployment crisis.

The scale of the crisis helped to destroy the weak recovery that took place in the 2010s.

In the US, for instance, all the jobs created after the 2008-10 recession were wiped out by the coronavirus crisis.

Yet there's no need for mass unemployment. For instance,



Millions of workers have been dealt a devastating blow during 2020 (top). Sexism and racism play a part in low wages—but they can be beaten, such as in the Glasgow equal pay strike in 2018 (above)

we need to see a rapid shift to renewable energy and decarbonisation of the economy.

And at the same time many workers in the crisis-hit aviation sector have skills that could be used in a green transition.

A socialist solution seems obvious. But it's not happening because under capitalism everything is subsumed to the logic of capital accumulation and maximising profits.

Faced with the jobs massacre, we need to resist job cuts and make the bosses pay for the coronavirus crisis.

But to stop the misery and waste of unemployment, we also need to break from the profit system.

The alternative is a socialist society, based on a democratically-planned economy focused on meeting human need.

### READ MORE

#### The crisis deepens

● International Socialism article by Joseph Choonara  
● [isj.org.uk/the-crisis-deepens/](https://isj.org.uk/the-crisis-deepens/)

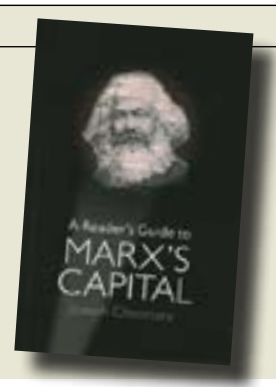
#### Can workers stop job cuts?

● Socialist Worker article by Sadie Robinson  
● [bit.ly/SWCuts](https://bit.ly/SWCuts)

#### A Reader's Guide to Marx's Capital

● By Joseph Choonara  
● £10

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## You can't rely on courts to beat the Labour right

Supporters of Jeremy Corbyn are avoiding a political fight with the leadership, writes Nick Clark

JEREMY CORBYN is taking the Labour Party to court. The party he once led is on a crusade to grind him and the politics he represents into the mud.

His supporters are following his lead. Ever more of them are being suspended from membership for speaking out in solidarity with him, for challenging the smears against them, or for criticising Israel.

Momentum co-chair Andrew Scattergood said the Labour left organisation would "support them legally" to keep passing motions in support of Corbyn. But it's difficult to know exactly who or how many Labour members are fighting suspensions as the process demands they stay silent.

Suspension letters from Labour tell the accused to keep everything "private".

In other words they can't challenge their suspension publicly or openly. Treating each suspension purely as a legal case means playing by these rules—keeping those accused isolated and silent.

It only looks like a good option if you've decided you can't—or won't—fight the accusations politically. And that's not a strong position from which to fight a political witch hunt.

### Overtaken

There aren't many cases where the courts have given justice to the left. It's a much more natural weapon for the rich and powerful to use against anyone fighting injustice.

Think of how many strike votes have been overturned by bosses in the courts. Think of how many families of victims of police violence have been denied justice.

By and large ordinary people are excluded from the option to use the courts. The massive legal costs—a barrier the rich don't face—help to see that. But say

LABOUR'S LEFT want to rely on the law to defend Jeremy Corbyn from Keir Starmer (below)

judge will see his evidence and have no choice but to agree with his case.

That's naive at best. All that evidence rests on the judge's interpretation.

The Labour left claims it's learned all the lessons about how the establishment lined up to beat Corbyn. If that's the case, how confident can they really be that an establishment judge will side with him against Starmer?

The cost of losing a legal battle is great—and not just financial. A defeat for Corbyn will be taken as another political defeat for the left, and make it much harder to fight the accusations hurled by the right.

### Ultimately

But even if the legal challenges are successful. What have they gained if they're won on the basis of not speaking freely, but adhering to the rules that ultimately prop up Labour's machine?

It's not worth winning a legal battle if the price is to lose it politically. Any fight in court has to be part of a bigger political campaign.

There's no good way of ducking the political assault on Corbyn and the left. It has to be fought in the open, as a collective defence of the left's politics and the right to stand with Palestine.

It's true that it risks expulsion from the Labour Party. But in that case, isn't it better to be outside fighting openly than to stay inside and be silenced?



BOSSSES ARE locked into a brutal game of competition—and workers pay the price

# CAPITAL AND JOBS CHAOS

Millions of people have been thrown onto the jobs scrapheap this year. Tomáš Tengely-Evans looks at how the capitalist system uses unemployment

Fat cat Philip Green



# Court ruling will put young trans people at risk

by LAURA MILES

THE HIGH Court of Justice made a shocking and disastrous decision last week that reflects the poisonous atmosphere generated against trans people.

The court ruled that trans people under 16 will need to persuade doctors to apply to court “in their best interests” to access puberty blocker medication (PBs).

Such medication, which is reversible, puts on hold the largely irreversible and sometimes distressing physical changes of puberty such as breast development or beard growth.

PBs give young trans people the option for breathing room.

They can decide whether to pursue further gender transition interventions such as cross-sex hormones once they reach at least 16.

The numbers accessing such medical intervention are small.

Last year nationally there were only 95 under 16s referred for such treatment in Britain. This was despite a significant rise in numbers



TRANS+ PRIDE protest in London earlier this year

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

referred to the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) in recent years.

The High Court case was brought jointly by someone who de-transitioned and a mother concerned that her child might access PBs.

The judges took evidence from Transgender Trend—a transphobic group—but not from pro-trans groups.

The ruling is a major step backwards. Life has suddenly become even more difficult and insecure for young trans people.

And this will enormously increase the already high levels of distress in those dealing with their gender dysphoria. It will inevitably increase the likelihood of self-harm, depression and

suicidality of trans youngsters.

There is also the danger that more young people will be driven to the internet to access medication.

The idea spread by various transphobic groups that young people get “fast-tracked” in GIDS onto a conveyor belt of PBs and then cross-sex hormones is laughable. The average waiting time

for a first appointment after referral is between 22 and 26 months. And there is an assessment period of at least six months following.

The ruling is likely to be appealed. But if it stands it means trans youngsters have lost the legal right to be considered “Gillick competent” to make an informed decision about accessing PBs.

## Mature

Gillick competent is a term used to describe whether young people can be emotionally and cognitively mature enough to understand the consequences of their choices.

Children certainly mature physically and emotionally at different rates. And there are issues concerning young people and consent.

The law that says under 16s cannot consent to sex provides some protection against abuse.

But we think under 16s should be able to access contraceptive supplies without a parent’s consent. The same considerations should apply to puberty blocking medication.

Vulnerable children undeniably need legal protection

and safeguarding in many situations.

Previous cases balanced children and young people’s vulnerability and safeguarding needs with their right to bodily autonomy.

But the High Court ruling effectively abolishes this for trans children and also risks introducing major legal inconsistency.

Transphobes celebrating this decision will no doubt feel encouraged to bring more cases to undermine what limited legal and human rights trans people have in Britain.

This latest blow comes on top of the Tory government going back on their original proposal to update the Gender Recognition Act.

Shame on anyone on the left who supports or condones such right wing attacks on this hugely oppressed group.

They’re not protecting trans children and young people—they’re helping to fuel their oppression, putting them at greater risk of harm.

**More online**  
Longer version at  
[bit.ly/trans1120](https://bit.ly/trans1120)

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# Indian farmers join mass action after Modi government attacks

Tens of thousands of farmers are confronting measures pushed through by Narendra Modi's government. **Yuri Prasad** says that mobilisations like this are a source of hope in dark times

 **SOME** of the most stunning images from India's recent 250 million-strong general strike featured the tens of thousands of farmers who joined it.

Streaming towards New Delhi from the Punjab, they battled with paramilitary police—dispensing with barricades and tear gas grenades with apparent ease.

Since the strike of more than a week ago, the numbers standing firm at camps on the outskirts of the capital have only increased.

All manner of farm vehicles are now blocking the main roads into the city from the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

This has sent a shudder of fear down the spines of the hard right politicians of the ruling BJP party.

Ministers are now scuttling between the camps trying to broker talks, while seeking to sow divisions in the farmers' ranks (see below).

The crisis was sparked by recently passed laws that aim to end government aid to farmers and open up agriculture to the ravages of the free market.

The BJP wants to end the minimum price guarantee that stabilises farmers' incomes by paying an agreed amount for certain basic crops.

## Markets

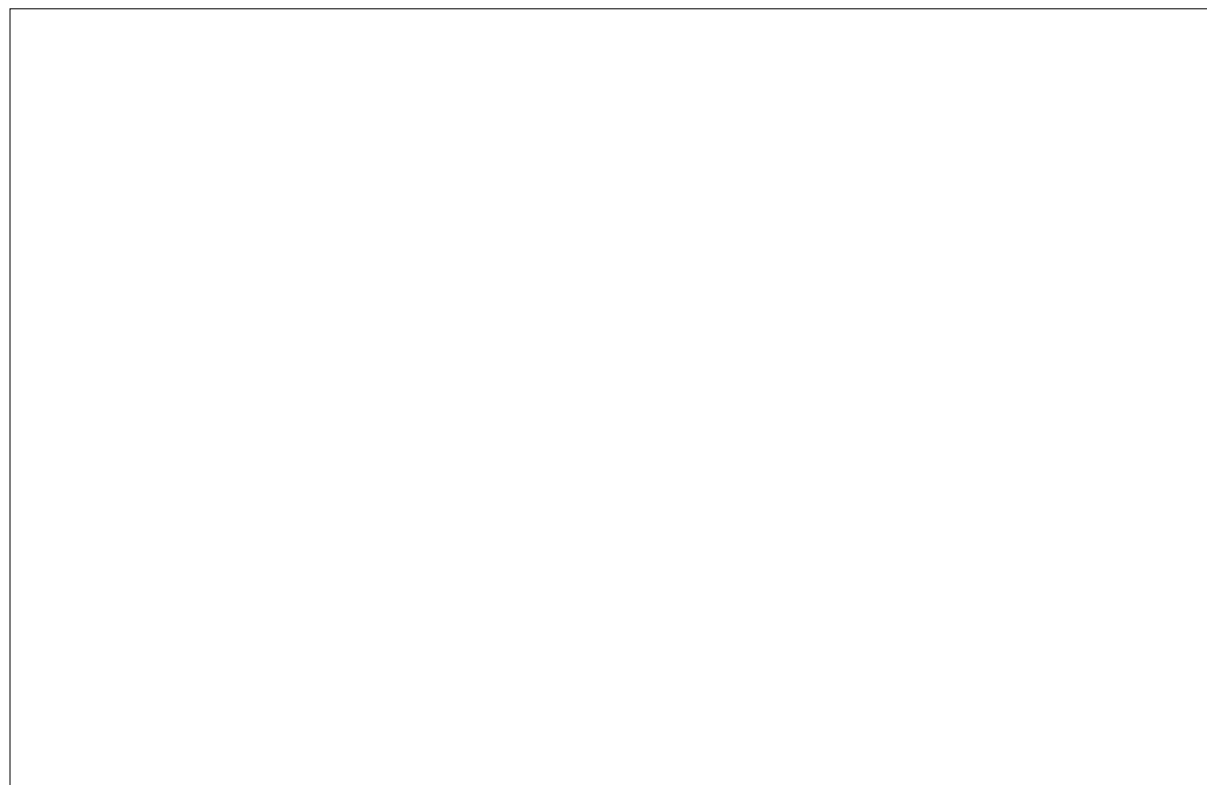
It also wants to get rid of government-regulated wholesale markets.

These are both longstanding demands of the vultures of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The right hoped to sell this as a way of escaping the clutches of large landowners and commission agents who often run the markets.

But most farmers are not convinced.

"We will lose our lands, we will



**TENS OF thousands of farmers joined a strike involving hundreds of millions in India**

lose our income if you let big business decide prices and buy crops.

"We don't trust big business," Gurnam Singh Charuni, one of the main protest leaders told the BBC.

Hundreds of millions of farmers believe this is the final straw, and that having endured crushing poverty and insecurity for decades they will now be ruined.

Poverty drove as many as 42,480 farmers and daily wage labourers to suicide in 2019.

More than half of Indians work on farms, but the agricultural economy is in a terrible state.

It now produces less than a sixth of the country's economic output.

Plot sizes are shrinking and crop prices are wildly erratic.

That means buying more land and investing in machinery is out of the question for many.

The BJP hopes that reforms will help introduce more large scale industrial farming operations.

They know the price of this will mean many small farmers will be driven to destruction, but export revenues are a glittering prize for the rich.

The many ways India's vicious

class divide hits the poor was illustrated during the recent Covid-19 lockdown.

Millions of labourers in cities suddenly found themselves without work or money.

They formed miles-long marches back to the countryside—to their family farms.

No matter how destitute the countryside is at least it provided some refuge if things became unbearable for those working away in the city and sending money home.

Now the government is trying to take away even that faint hope.



**Actions are spreading in India**

## Action is spreading

 **FARMERS** protests are now spreading well beyond New Delhi.

Farmers from Madhya Pradesh are now marching to the capital in the hope of blocking the city from the South.

Meanwhile Hundreds of farmers have clashed with police outside the state assembly in Bhubaneswar in the eastern state of Odisha.

Countless protests are organised in states up and down the country—and are drawing support from unusual quarters.

Around 150 top Indian athletes, including some Olympic medallists, last week planned to hand back honours given to them by the government.

Many said they could not accept an honour from a government that attacked the farmers.

## Protests have the power to challenge divide and rule strategy

 **THE** excitement around the farmers' protest is a welcome change from the seemingly endless stream of depressing news from India.

Bringing together the poor from the countryside and the hundreds of millions of workers gives us a glimpse of the power needed to overthrow prime minister Narendra Modi and his followers.

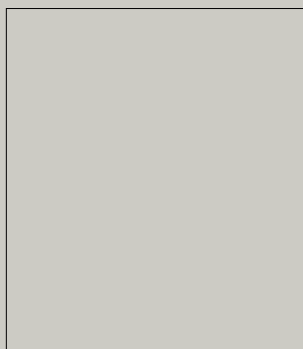
It can also help

stop the spread of the brutal anti-Muslim communalism that is being spread by the BJP.

But it is important to note that the farmers' movement is not composed simply of the poorest people.

The bulk of those blocking the roads will undoubtedly be those with the smallest plots of land, and those who have no land at all.

But those doing the



**Farmers have been met with brutal repression**

negotiating with the government ministers will be from the more prosperous layers in the countryside.

They are often chosen by even the peasants' unions to represent them because they are better educated, more articulate and have links to parts of the political establishment.

This carries a danger that any talks will result in a deal that favours

the better off farmers but allows the BJP to continue with its plan to reshape agriculture.

The government is also trying to whip up ethnic and religious hatred against sections of the protests.

Most of the protesters who have travelled to Delhi from the Punjab are Sikh.

Far right media commentators insist the farmers' movement

is in fact a cover for those demanding Khalistan—a separate Sikh state that would break away from India.

The protests, they say, are "anti-national".

This is the same language they use to describe Indian Muslims who are fighting for their rights.

The BJP's divide and rule strategies must not be allowed to derail the farmers' movement.



## IN BRIEF

**NHS pay fight is on in Reading**

SECURITY GUARDS at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading plan a five-day strike over pay from Monday of next week.

The 20 Unite union members are furious with subcontractor Kingdom Services Group Ltd for failing “to make a decent pay offer”.

**Sainsbury's workers deliver strike**

A STRIKE by delivery drivers could hit hundreds of Sainsbury's stores in London and the south east during the Christmas period.

Around 12 drivers, who work for subcontractor Harper & Guy Consulting Ltd at the Sainsbury's Waltham Abbey distribution centre, were set to begin a series of pay strikes next Monday.

The Unite union members plan 24-hour walkouts on 14, 15, 20, 21 and 22 December and from 6pm on Boxing Day until 6pm the following day.

**Union warns of 'crisp famine'**

A “CRISP famine” could blight Christmas because of haulage bosses' refusal to negotiate over pay.

The Unite union's warning came as lorry drivers at Eddie Stobart in Warrington balloted for industrial action. The ballot of the drivers, who deliver Walkers crisps, was set to end on Wednesday.

**Strike ballot at British Gas**

BRITISH GAS workers could walk out on New Year's Eve over bosses' plans to “fire and rehire” 20,000 workers.

British Gas owner Centrica threatened the move unless the GMB union members agreed to accept draconian cuts to their terms and conditions. The ballot ends on Thursday of next week.

**Leicester aerospace workers ballot**

AROUND 280 workers at SPS Technologies in Leicester are balloting for strikes over pay.

The Unite union members could lose as much as £3,000 a year if bosses' push through the attacks.

The ballot ends on Monday of next week.

**Bosses' attacks provoke reaction**

WORKERS AT chemicals giant Croda Europe in Ltd Hull are balloting for strikes over “years of missing holiday pay”.

Around 90 Unite union members are angry over “the company's failure to incorporate holiday entitlement into their shift rotas at its Oak Road site”.

The ballot ends on Monday of next week.

## EDUCATION



**BRIGHTON UNIVERSITY** workers and students rally during the first day of their strike

PICTURES: BRIGHTON UCU ON TWITTER

# Support for Brighton university solid strike

by **SADIE ROBINSON**

**UCU UNION members at Brighton university held a solid second day of strikes on Monday of this week.**

Workers are fighting plans to impose redundancies in the IT department.

They kicked off the walkouts with a strike on Wednesday of last week, and planned to be out again on Thursday.

Mark Abel is chair of the union branch at Brighton university. He told Socialist Worker, “Our strikes so far have been really good. We had a big picket on day one with quite a lot of students on it, and then had a fantastic online rally with 275 people.”

“On Monday, we had a picket in central Brighton and ran a zoom link with Rolls-Royce strikers in Barnoldswick.”

Workers plan a further rally on Thursday, with John McDonnell MP, other workers fighting redundancies and student rent strikers.



**Strikers' virtual picket**

University bosses want to impose compulsory redundancies in the IT department—at a time when many staff work from home and rely on IT support.

Most of those affected are in the Unison union, with a couple in UCU.

Mark said bosses may be testing workers' resolve to fight back ahead of more possible attacks.

“The university is desperate to impose redundancies,” he said. “We think that they want to do so in order to set a precedent for next year. They have just done a restructure that requires fewer admin

staff. So admin staff are expecting a cull.”

“Other universities have been shedding academic staff, so we think that's on the cards as well.”

The Brighton strike comes as higher education workers across Britain face attacks on their jobs, pay and conditions. But more and more are resisting.

UCU members at Northumbria university voted for strikes last month over health and safety concerns.

Those at Birmingham City University are currently balloting for action.

And UCU members at Roehampton University backed strikes in a consultative ballot last week. Some 64 percent supported strikes and 88 percent action short of a strike, on a 70 percent turnout.

University bosses are using the coronavirus crisis to push through attacks. More resistance is urgently needed to defend workers—and students' education.

●Donate to Brighton strike at [bit.ly/BackBrighton](https://bit.ly/BackBrighton) and tweet to @BrightonUCU

## EAST LONDON SCHOOLS

## Fresh walkout at Little Ilford

NEU UNION members at Little Ilford school struck for a seventh day on Tuesday of this week.

Workers are fighting a planned expansion of the school that they say would harm education and working conditions.

The walkout on Tuesday marked the first day of a two-day strike at the east London school. It follows a three-day strike the previous week, and

two-day and 24-hour strike last month.

Newham council wants to forcibly expand student numbers at the school from 1,470 to 1,800.

Strikers say this would hit support for vulnerable children.

Some 24 percent of students at the school have special educational needs.

●Send messages of support to [protectlittleilford@gmail.com](mailto:protectlittleilford@gmail.com)

## Strike for reinstatement

WORKERS AT the London Design and Engineering (LDE) free school in Newham, east London, are taking action to demand the reinstatement of NEU union rep Sharon Morgan.

NEU members began three days of strikes on Tuesday.

The director summarily sacked Sharon. And he is still refusing to take Sharon back despite an Employment Tribunal ruling in her favour.

Teachers on the picket line during the third strike day last Wednesday told Socialist Worker why they are backing the action. One striker said, “We have intimidation, bullying and a lack of voice for staff.”

“Hopefully we will get our rep back and then we can

start to move forward on workload issues.”

NEU Newham secretary Louise Cuffaro spoke to an NASUWT union member who stopped at the picket line during this week's strike.

She asked the worker to ensure that no NASUWT member covered classes of fellow trade union members on strike, and encouraged them to get organised. A letter to NASUWT members is planned.

The attack on Sharon is a matter for all workers, regardless of their union.

**Miriam Scharf**

●Send messages of solidarity to [ldetc.neu@gmail.com](mailto:ldetc.neu@gmail.com) and [louise.cuffaro@neu.org.uk](mailto:louise.cuffaro@neu.org.uk) Sign the petition [actionnetwork.org/petitions/sharon](https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/sharon)

## Hackney fights for schools

WORKERS HELD a militant, lively picket at Leaways school in Hackney, east London, last Thursday.

Leaways is an independent special school, with a focus on Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Social, Emotional, Mental Health Needs (SEMH).

It currently has over 80 students from Hackney and neighbouring boroughs.

Workers—44 out of 53 of them are in the NEU union—believe that students are being short-changed.

They are demanding that more resources be put into the specialist support that students need.

This includes counselling and smaller class sizes, all with a teaching assistant.

Workers have won union recognition, but also want parity with staff in state schools, including open, transparent pay scales and proper sick pay.

They currently only have seven days sick pay, and management openly admit this is to discourage absence.

Leaways is part of a wider chain, the Kedleston Group registered in Jersey—a tax haven.

**Jane Bassett**

●Messages of support to Hackney NEU secretary [david.davies@neu.org.uk](mailto:david.davies@neu.org.uk)

## MERSEYSIDE SCHOOLS

## Victory after school tries to cut £100,000 by slashing education workers' salaries

A GROUP of workers has stopped big pay cuts after threatening to strike.

At the Woodchurch Road Primary School in Wirral, teaching assistants and play workers had been threatened with 20 percent cuts to their hours.

The school was trying to make “savings” of £100,000.

For some workers this meant losing nearly

£4,000 a year in pay.

The 21 Unison union members directly affected balloted for strikes and delivered a 100 percent turnout and a 100 percent Yes vote.

Two days before their first strike day, school management took away the threat of cuts for the play workers. They also removed the immediate threat to

hours for teaching assistants.

Although the strike was called off, these Unison members are determined to fight in the summer if management come back again.

An online solidarity event that had been organised with strikers by Merseyside People Before Profit was turned into a victory rally.

**Mark O'Brien**

## Health and safety walkouts called

NEU UNION members at a school in Wallasey, Merseyside, have called six days of strikes over health and safety concerns.

The Kingsway Primary School workers say they have had to flush toilets with buckets of water as there is no running water at the school.

Their first strike was set to take place on Thursday of this week. More walkouts are planned for 15 and 16 December, and 12, 13 and 14 January next year.

Over 85 percent of union

members who voted backed the action in a ballot. NEU regional secretary Peter Middleman said workers are also concerned about how coronavirus bubbles and infection outbreaks are managed.

Ian Harris of Wirral NEU, said, “Our members have been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure children can access the education they deserve.”

“It is unfortunate that they have been hindered by the action of the employer. Members have been raising concerns since May.”

●Send messages of support to [ian.harris@neu.org.uk](mailto:ian.harris@neu.org.uk)



## ENGINEERING

# Rolls-Royce battle now has to escalate

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

**TRADE UNIONISTS** and campaigners took part in an “overwhelming display of support” for striking Rolls-Royce workers in Barnoldswick, Lancashire, last Saturday.

Dozens of vehicles joined a car rally in solidarity with Unite union members at the aero engineering plant.

They walked out against 350 job cuts and offshoring of production in November.

Bosses escalated the dispute with a Christmas lockout at the end of last month, meaning the factory will remain closed until the New Year.

## Pressure

Mark Porter, Unite works convenor at the plant, told the rally, “We just need to keep up the pressure. We need to keep the faith, and Rolls-Royce needs to get around the negotiating table.”

Bosses say they’ve no alternative to shutting down production because coronavirus has hit the aviation industry.

But Mark told bosses at the



PART OF the car rally on Saturday

rally, “And if it’s not engine blades we’re making, then what else is it we’re making?”

“Because there is lots of work to be done.”

“We are highly skilled people, we can do anything.”

Unite union regional officer Ross Quinn said he was “in awe of our Rolls Royce reps, members and the community” after the car rally. “There were literally miles and miles of cars at the

rally, I can’t wait to see the footage,” he said.

“Rolls-Royce is at the heart of Barnoldswick and has been in the town for nearly 80 years, its departure would be absolutely devastating to the town.”

“What Rolls-Royce is currently doing is a complete betrayal of Barnoldswick.”

If Rolls-Royce bosses get away with their bullying in Barnoldswick, they will

ramp up attacks across the company.

Their lockout has to be met by an escalation from the whole movement.

This could mean spreading strikes to other plants, with the union picking a workplace issue to manufacture a dispute over.

More action is needed to beat Rolls-Royce.

●Send messages of support to [ross.quinn@uniteunion.org](mailto:ross.quinn@uniteunion.org)

## COLLEGES

# Against victimisation at Shrewsbury Colleges group

MEMBERS OF Shrewsbury Colleges Group NEU union are fighting the victimisation of John Boken, one of the union reps at the college.

A protest was held on Friday of last week. NEU members were joined by members of the FBU and Unison unions and Telford and Shropshire TUC to show solidarity.

The protest started at 8am, with the weather cold and damp. But the protesters were warmed by support.

John said he was overwhelmed by the backing from other unions.

The NEU is in dispute over institutionalised bullying.

While in informal talks with management on this issue, one of their representatives was

served with notification of an investigation into gross misconduct.

This came after he had raised concerns about bullying, racism and other discriminatory behaviour.

Lead union rep Jean Evanson said she had written countless emails outlining the flaws in the investigation and the fact that it was totally unnecessary.

Jean said, “We are a strong NEU group and have already delivered a strong indicative ballot result. We will shortly be moving to a formal ballot to stop the victimisation of John Boken and to get the threat of disciplinary action dropped.”

More protests are planned.

●Send messages of support to [jean.evanson@neu.org.uk](mailto:jean.evanson@neu.org.uk)

## RAIL WORKERS

# Pay fight at Alstom sites

OVER 20 strikers gathered outside the rail maintenance depot in Longsight, Manchester last Thursday evening.

They are fighting to overturn a pay freeze imposed by the giant Alstom engineering multinational.

“Those managers over there told us all we had to keep coming in, we’re essential workers,” one of the pickets said. “But they all worked from home—and most managers have been paid a bonus.”

About 350 RMT union members are staging a series of 24-hour strikes, affecting maintenance work at depots

along the West Coast Mainline from Wembley up to Scotland.

**Mike Killian**

■**TRAIN GUARDS** in Glasgow struck for a second time against unfair deployment of disciplinary procedures on Sunday of last week.

The RMT members are due to walk out for the next four Sundays. They are also undertaking an overtime ban, refusing to work on their rest days or perform duties from a higher grade.

Their strike shows it is possible to resist attacks even during the Covid-19 crisis.

## ROUND-UP

# Housing protest for change

THE SOCIAL Housing Action Campaign and Unite Housing Workers Branch protested last week outside One Housing Group (OHG) headquarters. They were demanding safer homes and workplaces.

They say health and safety breaches have accelerated under chief executive Richard Hill—who takes £205,964 a year.

Failings include a 20-kilogram piece of lead falling from a window into communal gardens at London Plane House in Newham. Dangerous cladding on Suttons Wharf in Bethnal Green which puts residents at risk, and they have been left for weeks without heating and hot water.

And, at Phoenix Heights in Canary Wharf, OHG refused to allow Unite’s safety rep to inspect the building. Andy told Socialist

Worker, “This is typical of housing associations, especially the big ones. Social housing was created to support the working class.”

“OHG has money in the bank but treat their residents with contempt. They need to be held accountable.”

■**MORE THAN 30** workers at the University of Greenwich, members of the IWGB union, are to strike over pay and conditions.

The union says the university has failed to pay the majority black and Asian security workers that are outsourced to Sodexo the £300 Covid-19 bonus they paid to other workers.

The IWGB is demanding that outsourced workers are provided with the same terms and conditions as workers who work directly for the university.

●Donations to [bit.ly/Greenwichstrikefund](https://bit.ly/Greenwichstrikefund)

## COUNCIL WORKERS

# Victory in Donny bins

BIN WORKERS in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, are celebrating a victory after they threatened strikes.

The Unite union members were set to walk out on Tuesday of next week, the first in a series of actions this month.

They voted 94 percent in favour of strikes after bosses at subcontractor Suez dismissed the union’s lead rep Damien Nota and suspended other workers.

They have won the reinstatement of Nota, the lifting of all other suspensions and other demands.

Unite regional officer Shane Sweeting said, “This is a tremendous victory.”

“Once Suez recognised the strength of feeling among members and understood the level of disruption that bin strikes would cause in Doncaster, it entered into negotiations and a highly satisfactory deal has been hammered out.”

## HOSPITALS

# Heartless at Heartlands

PORTERS AT Heartlands hospital in Birmingham held their third 48-hour strike last week against plans to force them on to flexible shift patterns.

The low paid Unison union members could lose thousands of pounds in pay if new rotas are put through. And shift changes may force many porters out of the job.

Their present shift agreement allows them to factor in responsibilities, such as school runs and care for relatives.

The strikers are taking part in a series of strikes that will run until mid January.

As a result of the action, the union has grown. Now the focus is to give zero-hour NHS bank porters the confidence to join the strikes too.

Strikers rightly demand that they should be able to work to live, not live to work.

●Send messages of support to [westmids@unison.co.uk](mailto:westmids@unison.co.uk)

## CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

# Examiners demand safety

DRIVING EXAMINERS are balloting for strikes against being made to carry on working in unsafe conditions during the pandemic.

The ballot comes after the Tory government decided driving tests could resume in July this year. In a message to its members, the PCS union said, “Driving examiners obviously cannot socially distance.”

“Indeed, they are compelled to be with six strangers a day, less than half

a metre apart in what is in essence a box. At the same time, government are asking the public to keep to strict distancing rules, including advice on not sharing a car.”

The union says tests in areas under tier three lockdown should only go ahead for critical workers, and tests in tier two areas should be limited to two a day.

It says examiners over 60 or with underlying health conditions should not be made to carry out tests.

## FOOD PROCESSING

BOSSES AT Bakkavor food processing in Kent have conceded full pay for anyone taking coronavirus-related absence—and a rollout of mass testing at their Tilmanstone salads factory.

The company supplies major retailers including Marks & Spencer.

The concessions come after two Covid-19 related

deaths among workers at the plant last week. Cases rocketed from around 35 in the third week of November to 99 recently.

The GMB union has been calling for the measures since the outbreak started.

Frank Macklin said, “These changes will help save lives.” It is outrageous that Bakkavor did not move sooner.



# BREXIT MEANT MORE THAN THIS

**THE TORIES and Boris Johnson desperately continued their faltering attempts to broker a Brexit trade deal this week.**

Talks between Johnson and the European Union (EU) were on a “knife’s edge” the prime minister of Ireland Micheal Martin said at the start of the week.

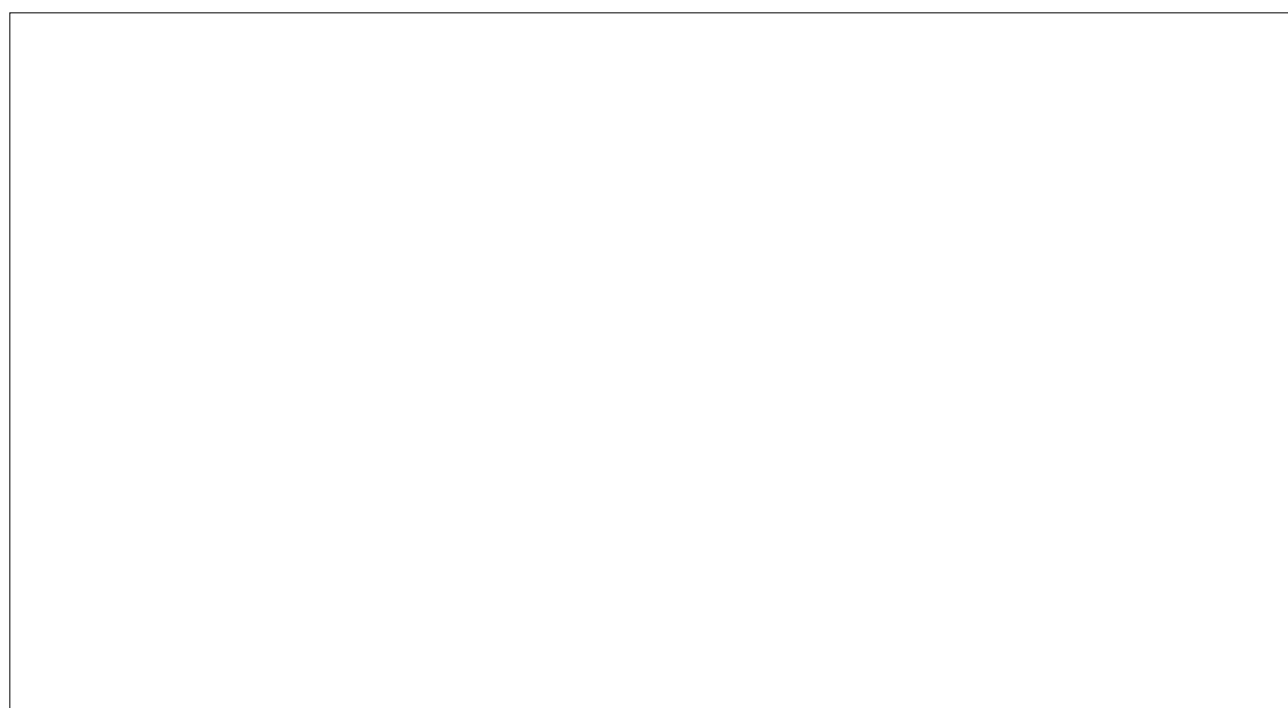
The EU’s chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, has said both parties were still at odds on a number of issues despite reports of breakthroughs.

All of this comes after assurances from the Tories that Britain holds the upper hand in negotiations.

Whatever the final result of the negotiations it is crucial to remember that the original vote in 2016 was at its centre a revolt against the establishment.

People who are generally forgotten, ignored or sneered at delivered a stunning blow against the people at the top of society.

The reasons for that rebellion were contradictory, but that did not change the essential character of what took place. A minority of



**BREXIT WASN'T a vote for more attacks on workers**

Leave voters were motivated by racism.

More were fed up with being abandoned to intolerable conditions while the rich and the politicians prospered. There were—and are—many

good reasons to be against the EU.

These include its hardwired pro-austerity policies, its total lack of democracy, its rules to aid bosses and its murderous border regime. The feeling

against the elites could have led to a Brexit in the interests of working class people.

That would have broken from the pro-business single market regime but maintained and extended workers’

freedom of movement.

It would have been linked to more money for the NHS and education, a higher minimum wage, action on climate chaos and other issues. This is what supporters of a left exit

from the EU (Lexit) argued. To win such a Brexit would have required mass pressure.

Instead the Tories have come up with various versions of Brexit designed to make it even easier for the bosses to exploit people.

They hanker after a “Singapore on Thames” where workers’ rights are shredded and racist laws are strengthened.

And Labour eventually conceded the demand for a second referendum. This proved disastrous at last year’s general election.

Now leader Keir Starmer—who led the push for a second referendum—is set to demand that Labour MPs vote for a rotten Tory Brexit.

It is right to oppose the EU but also to reject the Tory version of Brexit.

And whatever the divisions over the EU, the left has to unite against racism, the jobs crisis and the government’s disastrous coronavirus policies.

## On other pages...

EU rulers scrap over Brexit deal >> Page 6

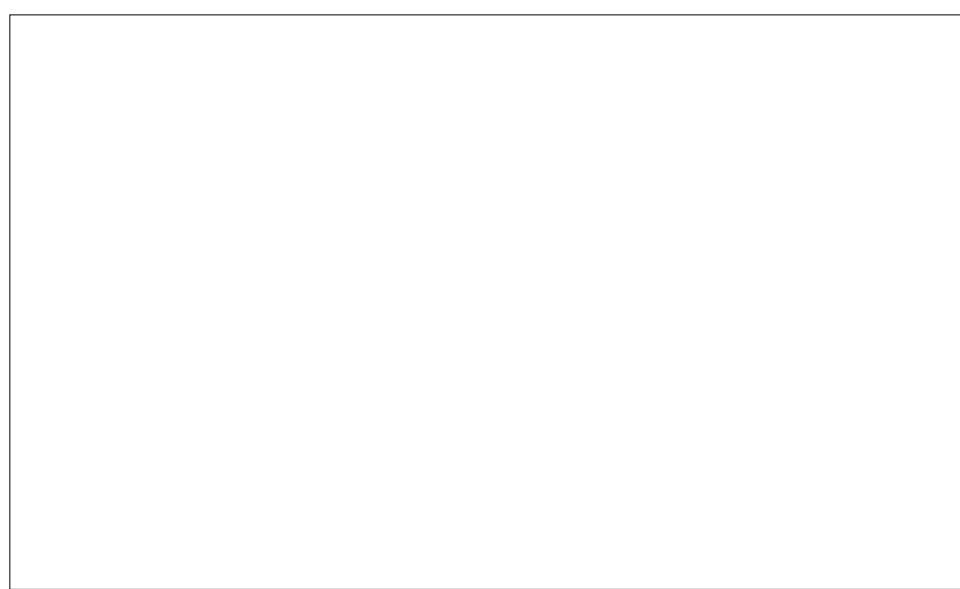
## EU border agency accused of brutality against migrants seeking safety

A BODY that patrols the EU’s external borders has been accused of unlawfully turning migrants away and sending them back to Turkey.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency—known as Frontex—was set up in 2016 with the specific task of patrolling the EU’s “fortress Europe” migration regime.

In October an investigative report by several media outlets alleged that Frontex operatives and Greek coastguards pushed desperate migrants away from safety inside the EU.

These crimes ranged



Migrants trapped at sea

from turning migrant boats back to Turkey or refusing to rescue people on boats that were in distress.

Frontex executive director Fabrice Leggeri has been accused of knowing that these atrocities were being carried out.

He was questioned last week by MEPs.

One MEP said, “Frontex seems to be a partner in crime of those who deliberately violate human rights.”

In March Frontex had over 600 operatives stationed in Greece.

The agency also recently turned off trackers that allowed

their sea and air units to be publicly tracked.

Frontex has tried to say that there was only one incident of their employees forcibly pushing migrants away.

But humanitarian groups and the media have alleged there are many more.

Frontex is not an aberration.

Diplomats may feign horror at the actions of the agency.

But in reality, it is acting in the way that the EU always has done.

And this is enforcing deadly border controls that have led to the deaths of countless people.